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Fernwood.—Frontispiece.



"Oh, here you are, Myrtle! I've had such a hunt for you:
it's my birthday."

p. 13.

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FERNWOOD;

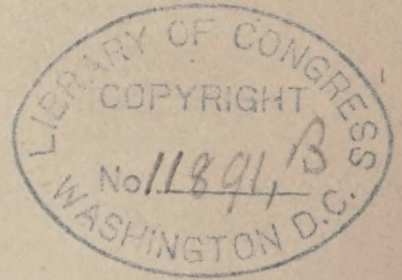
OR,

HATTIE'S BIRTH-DAY VISIT.

Emma N. [✓] Janvier

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"FRUIT-GATHERING," "DANIEL TRACY'S STORE," "TWENTY-FIVE CENTS," "FORGIVENESS," ETC.



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FERNWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

MAMMA," said Hattie Winslow, "have you thought about my birth-day? Day after to-morrow will be the 10th of June, 1852, and I don't want you to forget it."

"I have not forgotten it, my child: you will be ten years old; and now how would you like to spend that important day?"

"You know, mamma, where I would like to go best of all."

"To Fernwood, I suppose, to be with grandma?"

"You have guessed exactly right, ma'am," said Hattie, with sparkling eyes; "may I go?"

"I know of nothing to prevent, and I have been thinking, my dear, that you will have the holiday even without the excuse of your birth-

day, because I hear your teacher is likely to be called away by the illness of her mother."

"Then, perhaps, I may stay all night?"

"We'll see; now take your book again, and sit still."

Two or three friends had been shown into the parlour, and Mrs. Winslow wished to converse with them.

Hattie, after speaking politely to the visitors, withdrew to the recess of a bay-window, and by the fading light tried to resume the story she had been reading before the sudden remembrance of her birth-day called away her attention. Her eyes wandered off, however, out of the window; she saw in her fancy the dear old homestead, the sweet garden, the broad meadows, the beautiful woods. It was a long time since she had visited her grandparents, except merely for a brief stay, and she looked forward now to the happiness of meeting them with intense delight. There were no children there for her to play with: she could not have told herself wherein lay the great charm of a visit to Fernwood; but she did enjoy being there very much indeed.

Scraps of conversation among her mother's visitors attracted her attention; for instance:

"But, Mrs. Winslow, we certainly have something to do here on earth more serious and important than keeping our houses in order and arranging what shall be for dinner to-morrow?"

"You misunderstood me if you thought I meant that was all we were to do," said Mrs. Winslow.

"Every woman ought to consider that she has a special mission, and give herself no rest or enjoyment unless she knows it is being fulfilled."

"May I ask," said Mrs. Winslow, smiling, "what you believe to be your mission?"

"I think I am in my right place," said Mrs. Coleman, "when I am teaching the children in the Howard infant school to sing every morning. I have a good voice, and they seem to learn quite fast."

"But have they not a regular teacher?"

"Oh yes, but I didn't like her way of singing, or of teaching either."


Now, Hattie silently wondered what became of Mrs. Coleman's four little children, all under eight years of age, while their mother was absent every morning on her mission.

The others mentioned what they felt called upon to do: one spent her time distributing tracts, and as she was not married, and had no particular claims upon her leisure, Hattie said to herself, "That's nice and right." The other said, "She felt it to be her duty to be present at certain meetings held by the ladies for the benefit of an orphan school in a heathen land, and to be begging money for the establishment, as she was considered a very good beggar. She was consequently in the street a great part of every day."

Hattie did not feel interested in all that was said, but the impression was left on her mind that having a mission made it necessary to be in the street a good deal, and also to be away from home much of the time. She concluded, therefore, that her mother was rather behind the age because she found plenty to do in attending to the wants of her household, and in making home a happy place for her husband and children.

But gradually the sound of voices became less audible. Hattie found herself again absorbed in her thoughts about grandma and Fernwood, and before it was quite dark the visitors took their leave.

CHAPTER II.

HE 10th of June came, bright and clear, and Hattie was taken to the railroad dépôt and placed in a car. After a half-hour's ride she arrived at the station where she was to get out.

"Good-morning, grandma!" she exclaimed, almost dancing into the sitting-room at Fernwood; "I've come to spend the day with you."

Her grandma pushed back her spectacles and looked up from her sewing, her face changing instantly from its sad expression:

"Well, come and give me a kiss, then, the first thing, dear. How the child looks! Did you walk or run or fly to get here?"

"I would have liked to fly, grandma, after I got out of the car, but I could only run; so I did that just as fast as I could. I guess my hair does look pretty wild;" and the child began to unfasten her bonnet and take off her coat without waiting for any formal invita-

tion ; she and grandma were such fond friends there was no need of standing on ceremony.

“ Now take your little chair and tell me all about it. Where’s mother ? And what’s become of school to-day ? ”

Hattie put away her things in the entry closet and sat down, feeling quite willing to do so after her race of half a mile from the station.

“ Well, grandma, this is my birth-day, and mother was going to give me a holiday, anyhow, but, besides that, our teacher heard her mother was sick, and there is no school to-day. Mother said, if she sent no message to me this afternoon, I might stay all night. Oh, I do hope she will not send any ! ”

“ Well, dearie, the little white bed is all ready for you ; I made it up yesterday. I did not forget the day of the month, and I hoped you would come and spend your birth-day with me, though I could not be sure you would like it. ”

“ Mamma offered to take me to the city ; she said I might go to the menagerie. ”

“ And you declined that tempting offer, Hattie ? I’m astonished ! ”

“ Yes, grandma ; I said I would rather

spend the day with you than with the wild beasts. Mother laughed, but she said, 'You may go, and tell grandma that you paid her a high compliment—you preferred *her* to a wild beast.' "

"And so it is a compliment, my little pet," said the old lady, drawing Hattie up to her and giving her a kiss. "In these days, Hattie, old women are not considered very attractive; there is such a rush and hurry, so much dressing and such a time fixing the hair, real and false, that old people seem to be in the way with their quiet, slow notions and their unwelcome advice. I am very proud of the choice you have made to-day, indeed. We'll have a pleasant time, I guess, and a ride after dinner;" and grandma laid aside the tablecloth she was hemming and quietly stepped into the adjoining room, which was a large, beautifully-kept kitchen having an enclosed shed or scullery at the back. The rows of glittering tins that hung on the walls, together with two pair of tall, old-fashioned brass candlesticks that mounted guard on the mantel-piece, with the bell-metal mortar and pestle between them, all shining like gold, gave a sort of luminous appearance to the

room, as if the sun was lying on it all day, brightening it with its presence.

Grandma pattered through the kitchen to the shed, where she found her factotum Myrtle.

In a low tone certain directions were given, which were solemnly responded to by bends of the turbaned head; the conference closed, and from that moment Mrs. Cheston gave herself up to the enjoyment of her favourite's company.

Myrtle—ebony black—was the daughter of the last one of the family of slaves in New Jersey who had been freed by the will of Mrs. Cheston's father. No title but that of "our family" or "our folks" was ever recognized by the hale, faithful old servant. The Merediths, from the first settler all the way down to the present representative of the family at the old place—the last remaining daughter—were *the* people of that part of the country, and her services were tendered accordingly with all becoming loftiness toward the "trash" that neighbouring gentry were obliged to hire for their servants.

Myrtle was a character, and her mistress understood exactly how to keep the balance

even between the various discordant elements that composed it. Compared with most servants, she was invaluable. Happily, the favourites of her mistress were generally her own favourites also, and when Hattie had observed the necessary formality of going out to find Myrtle, no matter where she might be, at the barn, smoke-house, or chicken-yard or spring-house—the farther off, the better—and to do her duty by asking after her health, then, after that, all went serenely for the duration of her visit.

But if that ceremony were omitted through carelessness or forgetfulness, the dinner was apt to be less relishing, and no extra little pies or dainty cakes or sweetmeats found their way into Hattie's basket when she was going home.

On this occasion, as soon as the child's feet were rested, she set out on her journey in quest of Myrtle. After calling her again and again, and going to the barn and hen-house in vain, she ran down the meadow to the spring-house :

“Oh, here you are, Myrtle! I've had such a hunt for you. How are you to-day? pretty well? It's my birth-day!”

Myrtle rose from her stooping posture over the shelves to make her usual curtsey :

“Many happy returns, Miss Harriet! I’m as well as common, thank you, missy. Your grandma’s mighty pleased you’ve come to-day, ’ticularly as it’s your birth-day.”

“Is she? How do you know, Myrtle?”

“Ah! I can tell, missy; don’t I know when she comes tapping across the kitchen floor to the shed, and says, ‘Myrtle, we’ll have sich and sich dishes for dinner to-day, and cheese-curds or something extra for dessert,’—don’t I know there’s somebody come she sets par-tiklar store by? Now, I know’d a’most for certain that little missy was in the sitting-room the minute I heard old mistress’s foot coming toward the shed.”

Hattie laughed: “So you had to come right away to the spring-house for cream and butter and things, to help make a nice dinner? Well, I won’t hinder you. Did ever anything smell sweeter, though, than this spring-house? You make everything so white and clean. Good-bye, now, Myrtle.”

And leaving the old servant delighted with her heartfelt praise, Hattie travelled back up the meadow, filling her apron with buttercups

as she went along, just because they looked so pretty and bright.

"Got a pin, grandma?" she asked as she came into the room. The old woman took out her pincushion to give her one.

"You always have pins, grandma, and I never can keep one by me."

"That makes me think of my grandma, Hattie, when I was young. I used to tell her that the fairies must come in the night and fill the round ball she carried in her pocket, for it was always full, no matter when I asked for pins."

"Did your grandma hang her pincushion by this silver chain too?"

"Yes, just as you see it now; you see the chain is divided toward the end, or rather another piece is joined on to hold the scissors. They both used to hang in her pocket, just as they now hang in mine."

"How convenient that must be, grandma! and how bright you keep the chain!"

"That comes partly from constant use, my dear, and partly from an occasional rubbing up I give it. Now, when you have done examining the chain and hook, would you like to know how my grandmother used to be

dressed when she was sitting at her work with this hook fastened to her waist and the chain hanging from it?"

"Yes, ma'am, indeed I would; I think I like old times, grandma;" and Hattie settled herself in the chair with a most contented expression on her face.

Mrs. Cheston looked through a bag of pieces she kept in a closet:

"Now, here is a scrap of one of her dresses, Hattie."

"What queer kind of calico it is, grandma!"

"It is the large flowered pattern that was thought so very handsome in those days, with a high gloss on it; it was imported from England, and was quite expensive. Would you believe, my dear, that my grandmother considered herself looking very nice when she was dressed in a short gown made of this very pattern of calico, and a full skirt made of brown or black worsted 'stuff,' as the fabric was called?"

"Oh, grandma, you don't mean that she would receive her friends in that dress, do you?"

"I have seen her, when I was a child, of an afternoon in fall or spring, after she had taken

her short nap and had come down stairs, sitting on the broad, chintz-covered sofa in her parlour, just in that dress, with her knitting-bag by her side, and a sweet, placid, fresh-looking old woman she was.

“I can remember thinking, as I sat in my little chair trying to sew or read—for she did not like to see me idle—that when she paused in her knitting, with a thoughtful look on her face, that she had just fixed upon some nice thing she intended putting on the tea-table, and especially did I think so if I saw her get up presently and step out into the large pantry. I knew I had been right in my fancies when I found grandfather observing some unexpected dish or the first appearance of fruit on the table when he came in to tea.”

“Grandma, don’t you think housewives took more pains to see to such things in those times than they do now?” said Hattie.

“My! what an old-fashioned, noticing child you are, my dear!” said the old woman, with her kindly laugh. “I don’t see how you should know about those times, but you have found out the truth with your young eyes. When I hear husbands saying to their wives now-a-days, ‘I wonder what is the reason that buck-

wheat cakes and Indian slappers and such things never taste like they used to in my mother's house?" I could give them the answer in most cases."

"And what would you tell them, grandma?"

"Why, my dear, I would tell them that the mother they speak of lived at a time when a good wife thought it was a part of her duty toward her husband and children to see that they had good and relishing food placed before them three times a day; when she did not feel that her clothes were too fine to admit of her going out into the kitchen over-night to set a pan of waffles or light biscuit for a winter morning's breakfast, if the cook had not yet learned the knack of making them as nicely as she could herself; and not only that, when this same wife and mother went round to her closets and pantry herself every morning, to see that no fragments of nice things were left in the best dishes getting stale or mouldy, or too much bread gathering up in the bread-bowl, or milk turning sour in two or three different vessels."

"Grandma," said Hattie, "it is no wonder mother has everything so nice at home if you taught her to keep house so well."

"Yes, I taught her," said Mrs. Cheston, smiling, "but I had a rare time doing it."

"Why? Wasn't dear mother a good scholar, grandma?"

"She was one of your *leeterary* sort of bodies, as our old Scotch minister used to say, and when she got hold of a book that pleased her, my dear, it was very hard work getting her to give it up and attend to her household duties."

"She would give it up after a while, and do what you told her to do, wouldn't she, though?"

"Always, my child. Sometimes I would not require it of her, for I disliked to tear her away from her pleasant reading, and I would quietly go myself and do what I wanted to have her attend to; it was more for the sake of training her to be a good housekeeper than for the help I needed that I ever called her away."

"But, grandma, you think that mother knows how now, don't you?"

"Indeed I do, Hattie. I consider her one of the best housekeepers I ever knew, and I take no credit to myself for it, either, notwithstanding I tried so hard to give her the best

and quickest ways of getting through with her work."

"Then what did make her so active and industrious, grandma? for it seems to me that mother never allows herself time to read even the most interesting book until she feels sure that all the pickles and preserves for that particular time are done and fastened up, and that the week's mending is all finished. Mother thinks of everything just at the right time; I do not see how she does it."

Here the conversation was interrupted. In the afternoon, Hattie enjoyed a delightful ride with her grandparents; no message concerning school was received in the evening, and Hattie, very much delighted, retired to her little white bed, safe in the prospect of one more day, at all events, at Fernwood.

CHAPTER III.

COME to breakfast, little chick," grandfather called from the porch door early the next morning. Hattie was in the garden, running up one path and down another, making great haste to gather a bunch of pinks, roses, and sweet brier to place on the breakfast-table.

The sweetness of that old-fashioned garden while the dewdrops still sparkled on the flowers was beyond description. Hattie just drank it in as she went from one familiar spot to another; the damask and white cluster roses, now so rare, the clove-pinks, gilly-flowers, mignonette, and heliotrope, all sent forth their richest fragrance on this bright morning, and these were only a part.

Hastily tying up her little nosegay with a strip of ribbon grass, Hattie ran into the house, giving her ready kiss of good-morning and showing her flowers.

"Well, how did the little bed feel last night, Hattie?"

"I never knew anything more about it, grandma, after you took the light away," said the child, laughing merrily.

"You said your prayers I suppose, my dear?" said grandpa; "and after that you felt safe, and had no thoughts to trouble you or keep you from sleeping."

"Hattie told me last night that she thinks she will never be too old to say, 'Now I lay me down to sleep,' because it has everything in it that a prayer needs on going to bed."

"And she is quite right," said her grandfather; "it is the simplest and yet the fullest prayer for a child, or for any one, in lying down for the night."

"But I always say, 'Our Father,' too," said Hattie.

Myrtle just then looked in to see if they were all seated, and brought from the fire her hottest cakes, giving a kind look at Hattie as she put them on the table.

"Would you like to come with me this morning in the gig, Hattie? I am going to buy some new fowls at a farmer's three or four miles off," said grandpa.

"If grandma thinks she can spare me, I will be very glad to go," said Hattie, in her old-fashioned way; "we were going to have nice times to-day."

"Oh, I hope there will be plenty of time afterward, my dear; I think you will not go home just yet. You may go and help your grandpa select these uncommon chickens; the ride will do you good."

Hattie brightened up at the permission, and enjoyed her breakfast all the more for the pleasant prospect before her. They were to go about nine o'clock.

After family worship was over, and Myrtle and another house-servant had gone to their work, grandma began to wash her china and silver, as she did every morning, herself. This was a delightful hour to Hattie when she was at the farm. The little tub of whitest wood bound with brass was brought in full of hot water, and Hattie was allowed to get out the soft towels, and as a great favour was permitted to wipe the pieces as grandma gave them into her hands. Knowing how particular the old lady was about this operation, Hattie felt all the more the importance of her position in being her assistant.

While the work went smoothly on, grandma said,

“I wonder if you are as fond of chickens and ducks as I used to be when I was little?”

“I like to be among them, grandma, very much, but then, you know, we live in a village, and mother says it makes so much trouble between neighbours to raise chickens that we never do it.”

“It does make trouble, I know,” replied Mrs. Cheston. “I have seen chickens brought and thrown over the fence with their heads cut off, because a man was tired past endurance with having his garden seeds scratched up whenever he planted them, or his tomatoes eaten as fast as they were ripe enough to pull, if they had the good luck to grow at all.”

“But the poor chickens—what a shame, grandma, to kill them! They could not tell the difference in the ground, one side of the fence or the other.”

“It taught their owner at last, my dear, that the fence must be repaired and kept strong. But I had no such trouble when I raised poultry here, as a child. I never felt quite so grand, I think, in all my youthful

days, as I did once, and it was all owing to a pair of chickens."

"How was it, grandma?" and Hattie rubbed all the harder on a silver cream-cup she was polishing in her eagerness to hear the story.

"Somebody had said in my hearing," replied grandma as she twirled her cups around in the rinsing-water, "that my grandmother in the city would be pleased if we sent her a present of a pair of nice fowls; in the winter I thought of my special coop full of fine, fat chickens, and resolved she should have a pair at once. They were made ready for my father to take with him the next time he went to town, for my mother's mother did not live here: you know this is the Meredith farm. I sent a message of love to my grandmother, and hoped she would enjoy the fowls, which I had raised entirely myself, and then I considered the matter ended.

"When my father came home a few days afterward, we were all sitting round the table when supper was done, most of the family engaged in reading the letters from city friends and the newspapers, for in those days, my dear, such things came by private

hands more than they do now, when postage is so cheap, and I think they brought a greater relish with them, somehow. We always looked forward to father's return, when he went to the city, as to a kind of festival. Well, I got out my slate, and was busy copying pictures of animals from Goldsmith's 'Animated Nature,' when suddenly the silence was broken by the sound of my father's voice; he put down the paper he was reading, and said,

" 'I believe I am getting forgetful; come here, Gipsy!' That was the name he mostly called me, because I was such a wild, wandering kind of a child, I suppose, and I had black hair, too. 'Why don't you ask me about the chickens I took to town for you?'

" 'Why, father,' I said, 'I thought there was nothing more after I sent them; you took them, you know.'

" 'Yes, but don't you want to know whether your grandmother was pleased that you remembered her?'

" 'She was pleased, I guess, father,' I answered.

" 'She seemed to be very much pleased indeed; she said they were the handsomest pair of fowls she had seen all winter'—and then

father seemed to be getting something out of his pocket—‘and she told me to give you this little package and her love with it.’ I took it in my hand and went to the light, utterly surprised.”

“What was it, grandma?” said Hattie, quickly; “did she send you her daguerreotype?”

Mrs. Cheston laughed:

“Daguerreotypes had not been invented then, my dear child; they are of more modern origin. No; it was a little green velvet purse with a gilt clasp—children of the present day would hardly think it worth looking at—and inside of it were two bright silver half dollars.”

“Oh how kind that was in her!” exclaimed Hattie, in delighted tones.

“I cannot tell to this day, my dear, why that little token of my grandmother’s favour and approbation impressed me so deeply. For the money I really had no use; I was not accustomed to owning or saving up money, as many children are, but it seemed to me as if I was rewarded for the trouble I had taken with all the chickens on the place, for they were entirely my charge. I felt amply paid

for going out on rainy days to feed them, and for the anxieties I had known when a heavy storm had once carried away some little chickens but a few days old. Grandmother had praised my fowls, and she had also been pleased with *me*. I felt as if I had grown several years older that night, and I remember being quite serious until it was time to go to bed."

"I wonder what it was that made her so much pleased?" said Hattie, thoughtfully.

"Well, dear, I think it likely that grandma meant to encourage me in the habit of persevering in what I undertook. She found that, child though I was, and a heedless child too, I had yet been steadfast in my care of the poultry at home, and had taken good care of them too, as these well-kept fowls bore witness. Now, you know, if I had attended to them by fits and starts, sometimes feeding them three or four times a day and then forgetting them for a day or two, they would not have thriven at all; I should have found it impossible to make anybody such a present: and that I could be faithful in any duty gratified my grandmother so much that she sent me this little reward. No matter what a

child undertakes to do, there ought always to be a sense of responsibility connected with the doing it; the smallest matter should be done well and faithfully: don't you think so, my dear?"

"That is what mother says to me, grandma. She says, if I fold up a dress, I ought to do it as nice and straight as possible, and she likes me to make my bed every day as if the queen was coming to sleep with me at night," said Hattie, laughing.

"Did you ever read anything about eye-service?" grandma said, presently, when she came back from putting some china in the closet.

"No, grandma; I don't think I have. What is it?"

"If you were to do any piece of work when your mother was out of the room in a careless way, yet so as she should think it was done right from the outside, that would be eye-service. But if you were to do it all through exactly as she would approve, whether the difference was seen or not, then you would be acting right as in the sight of God. I have sometimes gone into a room, for instance, and found a servant doing her work in such a way

that if I had not happened to see her at that part of it, I would have believed she had done it as I wished, but she was acting only as an eye-servant; if I had been present looking at her all the while, she would have done it in the proper way. Now, do you understand?"

"Yes, ma'am, I think I do; it is easier to do things right all the way, I think, for then you need not be afraid of being found out."

"That is one advantage, Hattie, to be sure, but another is that you have a conscience at rest with itself. When you remember that the eye of God is always upon you, there seems no use of trying to do things deceitfully; you cannot deceive him, and it is so much better to have him for your friend, and to know that you are trying to please him in what you do always. But I don't think there is much deceit about my little Hattie," grandma added, with a kiss.

Grandpa came to the door with the gig:

"Come, now, my dear; I'll be ready to start in a few minutes."

"Yes, sir; I'll get my bonnet. We've got the cups all washed up and put away."

Hattie kissed her grandma, and took her seat alongside of Mr. Cheston, fully prepared

to enjoy the delicious summer morning, while she made the ride all the pleasanter to the old gentleman by her lively prattle and her readiness to be pleased with everything on the way.

CHAPTER IV.



“GUESS who has been here, Hattie?” said Mrs. Cheston, after her return, and while dinner was progressing.

Hattie looked up and down and did some little thinking.

“My schoolmistress has not come back, has she, grandma?” she asked, rather anxiously.

“No, my dear; you will have to guess again.”

“Then I guess it was my mother.”

“Right this time, Hattie, and she came to say that word had been received which would probably make the absence of your teacher longer than was expected.”

“Oh! then may I stay another night?” interrupted Hattie.

“From the size of a travelling-bag which your mother brought with her, I think we may have your society for several more days, my dear,” said grandma, smiling; “are you glad?”

"Indeed I am glad, grandma: I love to be here most dearly; but are you sure you want a little girl so long?"

"We will take the risk of getting tired of her," said grandpa; "she is a pretty good little girl, take her altogether. I think we can manage to put up with her until her teacher gets back."

"I expect to send her home wiser and steadier than most children of her age," said Mrs. Cheston. "She will take lessons in housekeeping while she is here that will make her more valuable to her mother when she returns."

"Yes, and she shall take lessons in riding on horseback, and playing at battledore-and-shuttlecock, and various other important matters," added Mr. Cheston.

"'Spect we'll all spile the child, among us," observed Myrtle as she brought a pitcher of fresh water for the table.

"No," said the old gentleman; "that is not part of the plan, by any means. You must take care of that, Myrtle, for little pies and cakes and such things come from under your hands."

Hattie's eyes glistened with delight; visions

of all kinds of pleasures spread themselves out before her mind, to be enjoyed in certain and quick succession all the time she stayed at the old homestead.

Some children would have felt it quite a hardship to be doomed to a long visit in so retired a place, with no child to play or walk with. Old people are not attractive to every child; they are convenient to have in the house, because dresses will sometimes get torn and require mending, and boys' buttons will come off; moreover, there is generally cake in the closet when there is an aunt or grandmother in the family, and a general sense of getting through troubles more easily, and of having indulgences granted. But are they often respected, loved, and tenderly cherished? Sometimes, I am glad to say, they are; and the child who is remarked for most frequently remembering grandma and grandpa, cheering their loneliness, walking with them, waiting on them when they are in health, and when they are sick trying to soothe their pain and going about softly lest their sleep should be disturbed,—that child will rarely fail to prove a good and true-hearted man or woman in later years.

Presently, Hattie came back from her happy visions, and said,

“Grandma, why did not mother wait until I came back from riding? Didn’t she want to see me?”

“Yes, my darling; she wanted to see you very much indeed, and was quite disappointed, but she and your father were obliged to return in the next train. They are going to spend a few days in the city, and left you here, knowing you would be glad to hear that your visit might be extended.”

“Oh, grandma, won’t we have nice times?” exclaimed the delighted child. “I can hear about so many things that happened when you were young and when mother was little, and I can save you a great many steps too, grandma; you must be sure and call me to bring you everything you want, and to go of errands for you.”

“You shall be made useful, dear: do not be uneasy about that; and you will keep me from being lonely while grandpa is away through the day, as he is so much at this season. I find I am more lonely than I used to be—perhaps because I am getting old.”

Myrtle’s shining black face wore an expres-

sion of great satisfaction as she waited on table, bringing in the dessert, which she always preferred doing herself. "Now," she thought, "my dear mistress will have a chance of being cheered up a little; she hasn't seemed as lively as common lately, and I guess I'll please little missy with sweet things I'll make for her."

So it did seem as if there was some danger that Hattie might be "spiled," as Myrtle said, when she was the main object of attention all round. It turned out, however, that the child loved others more than she loved herself, and that prevented the mischief: for of all disagreeable members of society a spoiled child is one of the hardest to bear.

In the afternoon, when Mrs. Cheston was taking her accustomed nap, Hattie curled herself up in a large chair, with a book of pictures in her lap, thinking she would enjoy looking at them extremely, but she had not turned over more than three or four leaves before drowsiness overcame her to such an extent that pictures and everything else faded into obscurity, succeeded by pleasant dreams.

CHAPTER V.

RIGHT as a bird, the next morning Hattie was chatting away at the breakfast-table, while she enjoyed the fresh country fare with an appetite heightened by change of air; for the child had been going to school steadily all winter, and had studied faithfully, and was looking rather delicate in consequence.

Presently she said,

“Grandpa, what is Cedar Swamp water?”

“Why, my dear, the name itself tells you, doesn’t it? Shouldn’t you think it was water that came from a cedar swamp?”

“Yes, sir, but Myrtle says it is almost red, and I think that is queer.”

“The roots of cedar trees, being so thick where the streams come from, do make the colour of the water a kind of dark brown, or red; it is very clear and sweet, though.”

“Yes, and it is said to be wholesome,” said grandma. “Would you like to see it and taste it?”

"Yes, ma'am, indeed I would, but there is none here, is there?"

"We might take an afternoon and go up to the Pines, as they call that region; the ride would do you good, and then we would be very near the Cedar Swamp, where your grandpa has a large tract of timber."

"That would suit me nicely," said Mr. Cheston. "It is well I was reminded of that troublesome piece of property. I ought to go up there and make an effort to collect some rents, and to see about having some trees marked out for cutting down in the winter. Perhaps if we have Hattie along the journey will be less disagreeable, for I confess I am not fond of going to the Pines."

"Well, my dear, suppose we were to make this excursion a little different from one of mere business? I will send and invite two little girls who will help Hattie enjoy herself in that wild region."

"Oh, when shall we go, grandpa? To-day?" asked Hattie.

"There I shall have to disappoint you, dear; I shall be very busy to-day on the farm. But let me see: to-morrow I shall have to be at home early in the day, but by

noon I shall be at liberty; if the weather is clear, we might go then, I think."

Hattie looked as if waiting till to-morrow was almost equal to giving up the trip altogether, it seemed such a long way off; but she would not allow her kind grandfather to see this; so she said,

"That will do, grandma, won't it?"

"Yes, my child, that will suit me better than to-day would have done, and as the day after to-morrow will be Sunday, you had better prepare your lessons for Sunday some time to-day."

"But, grandma, will I not go with you to your church?"

"Oh yes! I do not mean that I shall send you all alone to our Sunday-school, where you would feel strange, but I would like to have you learn two hymns and some Bible verses to repeat to your grandpa on Sunday. You know we have quite a distance to ride, and do not always go twice to church."

Now, Hattie was a child whose natural disposition was kind and very cheerful; she sometimes felt the exercises of religion to be a restraint on her spirits, and was not always ready for them, although never outwardly ob-

jecting. She had reverence for religion in itself, and she had reverence for those who consistently practiced its obligations: her parents and her grandparents she thought were about the very best people on earth. She would not have thought of such a thing as refusing to do as she was now requested; but still, to go to work on Friday, a lovely warm day, when all the flowers would want to be enjoyed and the butterflies ought to be chased and the birds listened to, and learn dry hymns and tedious Bible verses for next Sunday—"Oh my!"

She was not aware that her loving grandmother saw and clearly understood what was passing in her mind; she did not know how plainly her thoughts were written on her serious face; nor did she divine the tender anxiety felt for her that her heart might become the source of pure and holy affections, and her conscience trained to obedience to the requirements of God's laws. Safe for eternity, safe when death should come, whether early or late, safe in the arms of her loving Saviour, for this world and the next,—this was the burden of her grandma's daily prayers for the child of her love. Many are the prayers that

go up to heaven as silently as the perfume of flowers for the spiritual welfare of dear and cherished children who are playing and laughing in their light-hearted gayety, forgetful of their immortal interests, and ignorant of the blessed privilege granted them in the possession of praying friends.

After a few minutes' struggle with herself, Hattie looked up brightly :

"I'll do it, grandma ; it will be a good while for me to remember them—from Friday till Sunday—but I'll learn them very tight, and then I guess they will not slip out of my mind."

"That's a dear, good child," said her grandfather ; "come to me when you are ready, and I'll choose your hymns, and grandma will choose your verses."

CHAPTER VI.

THAT gate's open, and all the lambs will get into the field!"

These words were brought upon the wind to Hattie's ears from a distance, and looking up, she saw there was a commotion in the region of the barn among the sheep and lambs, and a man was trying to get round and head them off from the gate that was open. Now, Hattie felt a personal concern in this commotion; she had perched herself on the top of a square gate-post under a willow tree to learn her hymns, thinking she would make her situation as pleasant as possible while performing her duty. Unfortunately, she had left the gate open when she climbed up, and the field of growing wheat would be traversed by many mischievous little feet if it was not shut in time. Down she slipped, holding by the branches of the willow tree and giving a pretty good jump at the bottom, but she was in time to shut the gate;

the first of the lambs had just come within a few yards of it, and the whole flock was rapidly cantering after them, closely packed together.

Hattie was not afraid of lambs, of course, but finding herself surrounded by sheep, many of them distinguished by very lofty and twisted horns, she would much rather have remained out of harm's way on her gatepost. Her promptness of action, however, regardless of her fears, had saved the wheat-field; and before she had become greatly alarmed the tall shepherd came through the dense mass of wool, and taking her up in his arms, carried her into the enclosed yard round the house and set her down in safety.

"You have saved me a great sight of trouble," he said, "and I'm very much obliged to you, indeed."

"Oh, but it was my fault," said Hattie, "because I left the gate open when I climbed up to the top of the post to learn my hymns."

The man smiled at the honest little face.

"You needn't go to telling on yourself, anyhow," he said.

"But you are praising me," said Hattie, "so I thought I ought to tell you that I did

nothing more than I ought to have done, after I had made the mischief."

"Well," said the shepherd, "I must go back to those troublesome sheep, but I'll tell my little girls what a good child you were."

Hattie decided not to return to her perch again, but retreated to a summer-house in the garden covered with vines, and there she addressed herself once more to her task.

Her grandfather had chosen for one of her hymns that beautiful one beginning with—

"Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone,
He whom I fix my hopes upon."

It seemed long and hard to Hattie, but she conquered it at last, and learned it, as she said, "so tight" that in after years she never forgot it; and there came a time when she deeply felt the beauty and the comforting truth of one of the verses particularly :

"Lo! glad I come! and thou, blest Lamb!
Shalt take me to thee as I am;
Nothing but sin to thee I give;
Nothing but love shall I receive."

Oh how she loved to repeat those lines then! but that time was still far in the future,

while now she was trying, by every means of association, to engraft the words on her memory.

Her Scripture verses seemed more easy to learn. When she thought she knew them, Myrtle, who was straying around, having missed the child, came into sight.

"Can you hear me say my verses, Myrtle?" asked Hattie. "I think I need not study them any more."

"What verses are they, honey?"

"The Sermon on the Mount," said Hattie; "here is the Testament."

"Laws, dear child! keep your Testament; don't you know poor old Myrtle doesn't know how to read a word?"

"Oh, is that true, Myrtle?" said Hattie, much surprised. "Why, I might teach you some every day."

"'Most too old, I 'spect, Miss Harriet, by this time; but you say your verses, honey, and I'll set you straight if you go a little wrong."

Hattie began to recite the beautiful words; she met with no check from the old servant until nearly the last verse, when Myrtle corrected her: she had misplaced a word. It was a small mistake, but when the lesson was

finished, Hattie looked, and found she had been wrong and Myrtle right.

"That sermon is better than any I ever heerd preached," said the old woman, reverently; "there's heaps of comfort in it for poor down-trodden human beings. 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you,'" she went on.

"Why, Myrtle, you were one of the happy slaves in my great-grandfather's time, weren't you? You were never reviled and persecuted, were you?"


"Ah, my dear, them days are gone by so far now that it is not worth while to trouble your little heart with 'em. It was not by any of our folks that I saw trouble: the Merediths were known for their goodness; but I've seen trials, and plenty of 'em, for his sake, that the blessed Master above has helped me to bear and live through."

"You must be very old now, Myrtle," said Hattie, innocently.

"That's what I don't rightly know, honey. I was but a child when the old master left me free; that's a good while ago now."

"I hope you will live a great while longer, Myrtle, for grandma would miss you so much."

CHAPTER VII.

ATURDAY morning brought constant occupation to Hattie. It was the custom in the family to make all preparations for Sunday that could be made, to save the necessity of cooking on that day. Hattie divided her time between her grandmother and Myrtle, waiting on both as only young and willing feet know how to wait. More fresh eggs had to be hunted up, and off the child posted to the barn to look for secreted nests, knowing from experience that hens are a little wayward sometimes, and prefer stealing their nests, as it is called, to going in an orderly way to the places made and provided for them, no matter how comfortable they may be. She was successful in her search, coming back with eggs from two nests she had found, even to Myrtle's amazement; for she thought she was a match for the cunningest hen on the place. The healthy colour in Hattie's cheeks pleased her grandma; she

felt satisfied that she was not overtasking the little girl, who would go all day and make no complaint if she thought she could be of service. Butter and cream from the lovely spring-house down in the meadow were also brought when needed. There was a sense of pleasant bustle through the kitchen; the odour of nutmeg, rose-water, and cinnamon pervaded the atmosphere, almost to the exclusion of the perfume of climbing roses, jessamine, and sweet-brier, that were ordinarily so delicious in the early morning. After a time the gingerbread began to make itself known in the oven, asking to be taken out; and every child knows how inviting that smell is.

At length cakes, custards, pies, and puddings were finished and baked. The long kitchen-table by the wall stood pretty well covered with freshly-baked bread, and all the rest, from the great brick oven, where they had been shut up out of sight. Grandma washed her hands in the shed, took off her apron, and said to Hattie,

“You have been a great help to Myrtle and me this morning, dear; I would not have been ready for the oven near so soon but for your quickness in running to bring me things.

Now, Myrtle, we'll have dinner on table as early as possible."

Hattie was a happy child that morning: not only had she been useful to her grandmother, but she had obtained much knowledge of the manner of making certain desserts from observing the complete and skilful mode of putting things together. All that she saw was seen intelligently and remembered in after years, when housekeeping became her duty. This visit of recreation from school proved to be a time of actual training for some of the duties belonging to a woman's life, and such very pleasant training as it was! But it had also deeper and better meaning, as Hattie proved before the season was ended.

While they were at the dinner-table, two little girls arrived who had been invited that morning by notes from Mrs. Cheston to go with Hattie to the Pines. They had dined before leaving home.

"Grandma," said Hattie, "did you think I would not enjoy myself unless you brought company of my own age this afternoon?"

"No, dear; I knew you would have a pleasant time, even with us old people only, but I thought it would be still more pleasant if we

had more children. And now I want to tell you something: one of these little girls, Ruth Foster, is closely confined at home with an invalid mother; she very seldom enjoys any recreation. You will be glad to have her share the ride with you, I am sure."

"Indeed I will, grandma. Is she the little girl who lives in that cottage at the other side of the mill?"

"Yes; her father's the miller, and an excellent man; her poor mother had a fall some months ago, and has been hardly able to walk since. She is better now, however, and I hope will get about again after a time. I like the family very much indeed."

"And who is the other little girl, grandma?"

"Her name is Caroline Lee; she is a niece of Dr. White's wife, and is visiting at his house—a pale, delicate city child. Don't you think the ride will do her good, too?"

"I hope it will, grandma, I am sure. I'll try to get acquainted with them, and play with them, but I wanted you to know that I would have been just as happy with you and grandpa and Myrtle as if I had playmates of my own age."

"I do not doubt it, Hattie, in the least, but we must not make an old woman of you, when you are just turned of ten years old, must we?"

Hattie laughed merrily: "No danger, grandma! Now, will you take me in and tell them my name?"

After the early dinner, Mrs. Cheston went up to her room and rested half an hour, then the Jersey wagon with three seats was brought to the door; the basket, with some of the nice things baked that morning, was put under one of the seats. Grandma and Myrtle sat behind, two little girls in the middle and one in front with Mr. Cheston; they were to take turns in enjoying that post of honour through the ride of ten miles.

A ride through "the Pines" in a Jersey wagon (a vehicle so seldom seen now) is so different from other rides that it is not easily forgotten. The first two or three miles were over hard and even roads, before the sandy region commenced. The wagon was made without any springs, and used for those deep, narrow, sandy roads which cross each other in all directions in such parts of New Jersey as this—long tracts of forest-land, tall, noble

pine trees towering up in their dark grandeur as far as the eye can reach. Then the wholesome, resinous odour, the pure-tasting air, the clean, pine-carpeted ground beneath the trees, so clear of underbrush,—all this Hattie enjoyed, with many comments upon every little pleasant thing, pointing out to her young companions various attractions that they would probably not have noticed themselves.

Grandma told them incidents of her own youth when riding through these same roads, and talked so cheerfully that the little strangers soon felt at their ease and joined in the conversation.

“But I don’t see any Cedar Swamp water yet, grandpa,” said Hattie.

“Wait a little longer, my dear; we’ll come to the timber presently; we’ll meet the stream when you are not thinking about it. Here is a piece of woods so remarkably free from bushes and undergrowth that it is sought for pic-nics, camp-meetings, and political speech-making; there’s the remains of a rude kind of platform now, where the last speaker held forth, I suppose.”

“I remember,” said grandma, “a good, simple-hearted young man who sometimes

drove the carriage when I had friends staying with me, a great many years ago; he never could pass this spot without dwelling on its advantages for open-air preaching. We generally persuaded him to sing hymns for us in these lonely woods. He had a favourite hymn which he really sung well; I have never heard any one else sing it, and I can just recall the chorus, which would come out with great fervour and much repetition:

‘He arose—he arose—he arose from the dead;
He arose, and went to heaven in a cloud.’

This wood never fails to bring those words and the touching air back to me, though so many years have passed.”

“That makes me think,” said grandpa, “that children generally are not impressed as they should be with the importance of guarding the door to their memory in their young days. It is better never to allow rhymes or little sayings of any kind to take root in the mind, unless they are such as can be recalled with pleasure in after years. A foolish, silly verse learned in childhood from a companion may often give a grown person much trouble through life.”

Myrtle said to Mrs. Cheston, in a low voice, "My dear master is saying the very truth. What heaps of nonsense rhymes and foolish words do go from one child to another, sure enough, ma'am! Servants know, maybe, better than the mothers."

"I could always trust you, Myrtle," replied her mistress; "you know the danger."

"Look, Hattie," said grandpa—"look on the right-hand side of the road! What do you see?"

"Such a dark stream of water, grandpa! It looks dirty and not a bit inviting."

"Yet that is clear, genuine Cedar Swamp water. I will get you some of it."

So the horses were stopped, and Mr. Cheston took from his pocket the leather drinking-cup that he generally carried out with him. When he brought the water to Hattie, she was surprised at its clearness, and when she tasted it and found it was not unpleasant, she was quite pleased. The other little girls declined it at first, but thirst induced them to try the water, and they were agreeably disappointed.

One mile farther and their destination was reached—a venerable saw-mill belonging to

the Cheston property; the wheel was turned by this very stream of red water. When the wagon was unloaded of its living cargo, a huge pile of timber, ready sawed, not far from the road-side, made a convenient resting spot, and while Mrs. Cheston sat there, attended by her faithful servant, and grandpa went away to see about his rents, Hattie, Ruth, and Caroline looked around for places where they could enjoy themselves. The air was simply delicious, so pure and exhilarating. Among the logs lying around waiting for their turn to be sawed into boards, they played hide-and-seek most charmingly; for blindman's-buff and other games that required plenty of room they had recourse to a more open space covered with short grass.

At length, after being out of sight an hour or more, Mrs. Cheston heard their voices again.

"Now, Myrtle," she said, "spread a cloth over this nice broad board, and get from the basket some refreshment for the dear children; they must be hungry by this time."

"I hope the milk and cream are not all churned up in the bottles, mistress," said Myrtle. "No, these wet cloths wrapped round

have kept it just as sweet as if it was in the spring-house."

The rusks, pies, and cake tasted as such things never had done before to the children in this strengthening air; a little colour had made its appearance on the face of Caroline, while Hattie looked better than she had done at all. Poor little Ruth, so much confined to the house with her womanly work, enjoyed everything in a wondering sort of way, as if she was out of her usual sphere, and could hardly believe that she might be free to play.

Hattie did her best to make the time pass agreeably to them both.

"Oh, grandma," she said, "I was so hungry that I nearly forgot what I was going to tell you about."

"The old cottage," chimed in Ruth.

"And the green hollow," added Caroline.

"Yes; you'll come, won't you, grandma, and grandpa, too, and Myrtle? It's the sweetest little spot you ever saw."

"Where, my dear?"

"The other side of this piece of woods, ma'am—not far off. We've been playing all sorts of nice plays since we went away from here."

"We'll drive round that way, Hattie, as we are going back; it is not more than a quarter of a mile from here. When we have finished our luncheon, it will be time to get the horses put to again; they've had a good rest and feed, and you should have seen them drink the red water, Hattie," said Mr. Cheston.

"Grandma, I saw the house where the man lives who tends the saw-mill, and there were two or three little children playing round the yard."

"And oh, ma'am," said Caroline, "you never saw such dirty, rough-looking little things as they were."

"Their hair looked as if it was burnt in the sun till it had no colour left," said Ruth, "and it was cut straight across their foreheads."

"What were they doing?" asked Mrs. Cheston.

"They were making mud-pies, ma'am," said Caroline, laughing.

"They were as happy in doing that, probably, as many children in city nurseries are playing with wax dolls whose eyes will open and shut," said Mrs. Cheston.

"They looked as contented, ma'am, as if they were handsomely dressed and had an elegant baby-house like mine in town," said Caroline.

"Oh, my dear, they would never know half as much pleasure in a room filled with beautiful toys as they feel now going about in their little shabby frocks and bare feet digging and delving among the sand in this sweet, pure air. Nature is a delightful playmate; don't you think so?"

The little girl smiled, but she had really known so little about the charms that Nature possesses that she could not honestly answer, "Yes."

"You will find there are many attractions in a country life," said Mrs. Cheston, "if you make a long visit at Dr. White's, my dear; and I hope to see you looking both red and brown before you return home."

"She's as white as a lily now, ma'am," said Myrtle; "parties in the winter, I 'spect, and late going to bed. It makes children very puny."

"I spoke about those rough children, grandma," said Hattie, "because I wanted to ask if all these scraps and pieces we have left, and

some of the rusks, might go to them; we'll take them over, if we may."

"Myrtle had intended going there as soon as you had all satisfied your hunger, dear; we'll leave a few cakes in the basket, lest you might want something as we ride home, but the rest is all to go to these children, and I am glad you thought of them yourselves. You can play a little while longer, while Myrtle goes across there, and then come back and get ready for the ride home."

Half an hour afterward the wagon, once more packed up, had reached the spot so much admired by the children; they were allowed to get out again and point out the special attractions of the place.

"What do these green grassy hollows mean, grandpa?" said Hattie.

"There was once a very pretty cottage standing here, my dear; it was old when I was a boy, but occupied and kept in very neat order."

"See the wild roses all about, climbing over the stones," said Ruth.

"Yes; there was a beautiful old-fashioned garden here, nicely fenced in. Sweet herbs and tall white lilies grew here, and roses of every

kind in abundance: the woman who lived here was very fond of raising flowers, and had uncommon success with them. There are plants in our garden at home at this moment which were taken from roots in this one, roses particularly."

"And what a very fine tree this is living yet among the ruins!" said Ruth.

"Yes, an oak tree of great age, and there are not many trees handsomer than a large wide-spreading oak, to my mind," said Mr. Cheston.

"Then, grandpa," said Hattie, after thinking a few moments, "I suppose these green hollows like great saucers that we admired so much were the cellars of the cottage once, were they?"

"You have found out their history, and there is nothing remarkable in it. Can you fancy the hanging-shelf, with milk-pans and butter and bread standing on it?"

"It seems hard to imagine all that. But what became of the people, and what made the house go down altogether, grandpa?"

"The family who lived here in my young days," said Mr. Cheston, "were for a few years as happy and well conducted a family

as there was in the neighbourhood. It was the old story—old to us who have lived many years, though new to you who are young. A peddler came along one day: the temptation was strong to buy of his wares, because there was no store within several miles; he had all sorts of things in his wagon, and amongst the rest he had brandy, which he professed to sell very cheap.

“Neither the man nor his wife had been considered anything but perfectly temperate up to this time, but the taste for brandy was quickly formed, and the consequences during the next five years were degrading and sad to the last degree. The peddler who had been the first cause of their going astray continued to supply them at stated periods with the brandy which they craved, and there seemed to be no possibility of checking their downward career. On the 15th of January the wretched wife was seen in a state of stupor from the effects of liquor, and she was never again seen alive. The night following was bitterly cold. It was supposed the woman had fallen into the fire on the open hearth late at night; the house took fire from her clothing, and her husband, who was in bed in the next

room, was consumed in the flames, together with every board and timber of the dwelling.

"The ground was covered with snow, the stream frozen over, and the mill, of course, not working; no one had any cause for traveling that lonely road, so that the terrible fate of these wretched victims of intemperance was not known for some time afterward—no one could say how long.


"My father never had the cottage rebuilt, but in place of it he put up the house in which the man lives who now attends to the mill."

"It is a beautiful situation for a house," said Mrs. Cheston.

"Yes, ma'am," said Caroline. "I've been thinking how much I should like to know how to draw, it looks so beautiful—the broken walls of stone, with the roses climbing over them, and the green hollows and this noble old tree. It would make a lovely picture."

In after years Caroline did sketch this very scene from memory, and loved to look upon it, reminding her as it did of the pleasant, innocent afternoon in her childhood spent with the dear old friends who were by that time quietly sleeping in their grassy graves.

CHAPTER VIII.

 O you liked the two little girls who went with us yesterday, did you, Hattie?" said Mr. Cheston the next morning as they were driving to church.

"They were very pleasant, grandpa; I think I should like them more if I knew them better," answered Hattie.

"Well, that is paying them a great compliment," said Mrs. Cheston. "Sometimes it happens that the more we know of people, the less cause we find to like them, but I have found that there is generally something we can like about everybody."

"Yes, grandma, people are so different; you can hardly know two persons alike. It would be strange if we could not find some nice ways about everybody whom we know."

"But, Hattie," said grandpa, "there are two ways of looking at those we meet in our daily walks through life: we may discover

their worst traits of character and dwell on them exclusively, or we may admire the good that is within and not think of the bad at all. There are some persons who cannot see any faults in their friends."

"And there are some," said Mrs. Cheston, "who cannot see anything *but* faults. Either extreme is bad, because the very best of us have many faults and sins to repent of day after day, and the very worst may have some good qualities lying concealed that a fitting opportunity would bring to view. I am glad these little girls made a favourable impression on you, dear, because you can enjoy their company again, and they will be all the better for having a new playmate."

"I think I said something about giving you a ride on horseback, Hattie," said Mr. Cheston. "We will ride over to Dr. White's and visit that pale little city child while you are here."

"Oh, thank you, grandpa! I should like that very much. Ruth lives near enough for me to go and see her at any time; it will be a pleasant walk."

After church Hattie met Caroline standing under a tree waiting for her uncle's carriage;

she spoke to her in a friendly way, and Caroline was evidently very much pleased to meet her again.

"Were you tired when you got home last night?" said Hattie.

"I was very tired. Aunt undressed me and put me in bed five minutes after I got in the house; but I slept all night without waking, and I am rested this morning. What a lovely time we had!"

"Oh, hadn't we!" exclaimed Hattie. "But then I am always happy when I am with my grandpa and grandma."

"They are so kind to you, I don't wonder."

"It is not only that," said Hattie, "but they are so good, and they have such pleasant tempers. I never saw either of them angry in my life. Everything seems to go just right in their house."

Hattie would have loved and revered her grandmother still more if she had known that the sweet temper she admired so much was an originally quick and high temper, subdued by the power of religion only.

"How glad you must be to make a visit there!" said Caroline.

"I'm counting the days," said Hattie. "I

am afraid I can only stay two or three days longer."

Just then Dr. White called to Caroline, and she hastily said good-bye to her new friend and went to get into the carriage. Mr. Cheston's plain carriage—not the Jersey wagon, however—drew up next, and Hattie rode home with her grandparents.

Toward the close of the afternoon Mr. Cheston called Hattie to him as he sat on the shady piazza. She was ready, and repeated her two hymns without missing a word. Grandpa kissed her, and called her "his good little girl," which made her feel well repaid for the trouble of learning the hymns, but besides that, as he told her, she was now in possession of comforting and beautiful words that would come to her mind some time when she might be sick and unable to read, or in some lonely situation where they would seem like familiar friends to her. He said he had many a time felt grateful to his mother for having caused him to learn hymns to repeat to her on Sunday. When he was a thoughtless boy, the task was disagreeable to him, yet he dared not refuse, and now his memory was stocked with beautiful hymns that were fre-

quently a source of great comfort and pleasure to him; when he could not sleep at night, or when he was riding alone through the deep woods, he loved to repeat them.

When Hattie came to recite her Bible verses, she was not so perfect in them, but after her grandmother had called to mind the incidents of that morning when she was learning her lessons, she very kindly excused her, only requesting that the same verses might be learned perfectly on the following Sunday.

"But, grandma," said the child, "don't you think it was very strange how Myrtle could hear me say the Sermon on the Mount, and know it so well herself, when she could not read?"

"Yes, dear, I would think it very strange if I did not remember how she was taught in her youth. My mother would have her come and sit with us on Sunday while we learned our Bible lessons, and we learned them aloud, verse by verse, so that Myrtle could learn them too, and she was expected to repeat them as well as we did; the lessons were made short on purpose."

"Why didn't she learn to read, grandma?"

"I don't know, except that in those days,

when slavery existed in New Jersey, as it did in her childhood, it was not customary for slaves to be taught reading or writing. My grandfather's people were tended very kindly, and well cared for, but they were never taught to read."

"Here is a Sunday-school paper, Hattie, I brought home for you to read," said Mr. Cheston; "there are some nice pieces in it."

"Oh, thank you, grandpa! it is not the same that they take in our Sunday-school at home. I think it looks more—"

"What, dear?" said grandma—"more interesting?"

"Yes, ma'am; I like little stories."

"How much more," said Mrs. Cheston, "the children of these days would enjoy the papers and cards and magazines which are scattered abroad so plentifully if they could feel for one year the want of nice Sunday reading as I used to do!"

"There was very little reading that would interest children when I was small, and we were not allowed to read every-day books, so the Catechism was made to fill up much of our time; and it did seem hard to learn; the words were so long. There was a paper taken in the

house of a religious character; I cannot remember the name of it now, but it was too difficult for me to understand, so I could not enjoy it, of course, but one day I found something that I could understand, and enjoy also, and I never failed to read it when Sunday came, afterward."

"What was it, grandma?"

"It was a simple but very touching piece of poetry called 'The Orphans,' beginning—

'My chaise the village inn had gained.'"

"Will you show it to me, grandma?" said Hattie, with great animation.

"Be sure I will. It has not been printed for some years, but, to my great joy, I saw it again a few weeks ago brought to light by some one who seemed to love it as well as I did, and to wish that it should not be forgotten."

"Where will I find it, grandma?"

"In my writing-desk, my dear—cut from a newspaper—a printed roll;" and Hattie ran off to find the verses.

When she returned, grandpa said,

"Read them aloud, little woman; I should like to have them revived too."

Hattie coloured slightly; she feared her

reading was hardly good enough for such an audience, but the request was enough; and first asking if Myrtle might come and listen also, she went to find and bring her, and then read with much feeling the old-time poem.

When she had finished, Mr. Cheston said,

"Yes, where there was one pretty little story or attractive piece of poetry in my young days, there are a hundred now. Children are well provided for in good books of all sorts. How much they ought to profit by it!"

"Simple as this story is," observed grandma, "it is one a child could scarcely help liking to read more than once."

"Poor little things!" said Myrtle; "don't I remember how old mistress used to cry over that piece when she read it out to us servants!"

Hattie seemed much impressed by the story, and sat quietly poring over the verses until the evening began to darken and the tea-bell rang.

CHAPTER IX.



H, grandma, there comes a nice little donkey up the lane!" said Hattie, the next morning.

"Yes, and that is Caroline riding on him, coming to make you a call, I suppose."

Hattie went out to welcome her friend, who jumped lightly down from the saddle, and seemed very glad to have found the place again by herself.

"But I begged auntie so hard to let me come," she said, "she could not refuse."

"Your ride has given you quite a healthy colour," said Mrs. Cheston. "You will soon get strong and well in this pure country air, my dear."

"I am stronger already, Mrs. Cheston. When I first came, two weeks ago, auntie used to give me beef-tea to nourish me, and let me sleep in the morning to rest me. I get up now when the others do, and I can eat any-

thing on the table. I am a great deal better, but I am not well yet, I *know*."

"We think Hattie has improved too. She went to school very steadily all winter, and was rather more ambitious in her class than was good for her; so when spring came, her cheeks were too white, but if it had not been for her teacher's absence, I am afraid we would not have had her with us for some time yet to strengthen her up."

"If there's any place in the world, grandma, where I can get strength, it is here in this dear old homestead; it seems so natural here, with you and grandpa and Myrtle. I had rather stay here all summer than go to watering-places, for there I could not feel at home."

"Yes, and even little children have to be dressed up so much that they can't half play and enjoy themselves. Mother did not let me bring a single one of my party dresses when she sent me out here to Aunt White's to get well. She said she wanted me to run about and to ride my donkey and forget all about the city," said Caroline.

Caroline had been conducted into the usual sitting-room; it was not long after breakfast, and Hattie had resumed the work she had

been doing, which was stringing beans and breaking them up.

Grandma had finished her usual china washing, though the table was not yet put up, and Caroline observed the comfortable, home-like look of everything about. Judging from her standard of city life and city houses, she thought to herself, "And these are the rich people—the old Cheston family, as auntie says! Why, they seem as simple and nice as if they were not rich at all, and I'm sure that chintz-covered sofa does not look very handsome."

Caroline would have admired it more if she could have seen it when the venerable form of Hattie's grandfather was resting upon it of an evening after his labours through the day. There was comfort in the broad old sofa if it *was* plain and old-fashioned.

Children cannot always distinguish between the glitter of new and modern furniture and the substantial look of time-worn articles that have been handed down in good order from one generation to another,—all the more valuable for that fact. And so it is with manners: they cannot always recognize in the quiet, unassuming tone of voice and gentle smile the

manner of a true woman, but are more attracted by a certain gloss and display of good breeding,—something that makes more of a sensation.

While Caroline was waiting, however, until Hattie finished her work, she gradually perceived that the atmosphere of the old Meredith homestead was very different from that of some of the city houses which she had considered so grand and elegant. Mrs. Cheston talked cheerfully and pleasantly, without making the slightest parade of dignity, but yet in her presence it would have been very hard to say a careless or rude word, and still more to do an unbecoming action. There were marks of refinement everywhere, from the flowers about the room to the dainty little work-table. The one favoured cat of the household sat in the sunshine, curled up in one of the window-seats; a canary bird hung outside in a roomy cage, pouring forth, every few minutes, its rich and varied song.

The window-shades were arranged so as to make a soft, agreeable light in the room; there was a prevailing sense of harmony. It was no wonder Hattie loved to spend days at the old place, Caroline thought.



"Grandma," said Hattie, "please tell us about this great long piece of calico with pockets. What is it for?" p. 75.

At length the beans were finished and taken out to Myrtle. The two children then retired to the broad sofa, and grandma was amused presently to hear Hattie describing the silver chain for the scissors and pin-cushion and talking about the peculiar kind of dress worn in old times. Finding their thoughts were occupied with such things, she took out of her work-table drawer an article which even Hattie had never seen before, and asked questions about at once. It was called a thread-case.

“Grandma,” said Hattie, “please tell us about this great long piece of calico with pockets and long divisions all down it; what was it for?”

“In my mother’s time, Hattie, there were no nice smooth spools of cotton or thread, such as you have always known. Thread was used much more than it is now, and it came in skeins; these skeins were cut open at one end, and they were drawn up through these casings by the end that was not cut, and then used, a needleful at a time. Cotton was done the same way; there was a kind called wire cotton, very firm and fine; you will find a little skein of it, I think, in one of the pockets. Then here

are the red flannel needle-flaps, worked round the edges; flannel kept the needles from getting rusty. There would be black sewing-silk and different sizes of thread drawn through the casings; there are five in this one, so as to supply all demands. The thimble was kept in one of the pockets, and small work could be kept there also. Women, when they went out to tea with each other, spending a long sociable afternoon, could take their work and materials for doing it in this compact form in their capacious pockets."

"I think those days must have been very pleasant, grandma."

"From my own memory as a child, I should say so too, dear, and, indeed, things were not entirely changed when I was grown up. There was greater simplicity then, and more cordiality among friends; a visit meant something more than a mere form in return for another visit of the same sort, and little things were given and received kindly. For instance, I remember hearing my mother tell me that she went one day in early summer with her mother to visit an old friend who had been long confined to her room with illness. My grandmother got ready after dinner, and then went

into her garden and picked a handful of scented 'shrubs' that had just come. My mother, though very young at the time, told me she was struck with the effect produced by this simple little attention. Grandmother pressed them a little, to bring out their perfume, and going up to her friend, she held them to her, saying: 'There are some things that will do you good: only smell them!' and the invalid, taking them, replied in the same grave way: 'How kind you are! Oh, they are proper sweet, and make me think of spring.' She seemed revived by the little brown shrubs and the breath of garden bloom which they had brought with them.

"In the same way other small tokens of goodwill were received among mutual friends; no need of a bunch of hothouse flowers, camellias, and similar rare delicacies, or of a basket of imported fruit: a nosegay, as it was called, made up of roses, sweet brier, jessamine, and a sprig of old man or southernwood, with a white lily in the middle, was handsome enough for anybody, and oh how sweet the mingled perfume was in the parlour!"

After examining the thread-case thoroughly, Hattie and Caroline talked for some time

about the way of living in past days generally. From what Mrs. Cheston had told Hattie, who, as she said, "thought she liked old times," the child was able to talk quite intelligently on the subject. She admired many of the ancient ways and customs and much of the furniture and style of living, and was also able to describe them to Caroline; but still, on comparison, she thought there had been a change for the better.

"You do think, then, Hattie, that in some respects the present times have improved on the past?"

"Yes, grandma, I do. I would have liked the quiet, I think, and the comfortable things they had then, for I do not like railroads, nor anything that makes much noise and fuss, but—"

"Well, dear, I believe there was quite as much to make people happy in those days as there is now, for happiness does not depend so much upon what we are surrounded by as upon what we are within our own selves, but in one respect you will admit you are living in a more favoured time."

"What is that, grandma?"

"There are more religious privileges now

than formerly, there are more churches and ministers, and there is more activity in forming societies for the religious improvement of young people especially. But perhaps you are too young to understand this yet ; as you grow older you will be able to see for yourselves how the waste places in our country have been made to rejoice and blossom as the rose through the agency of self-denying men who have gone out to preach the gospel to those who would not have heard it otherwise."

Just then the most remarkable noise was heard out in the yard, and Hattie, who had never heard it before, jumped in affright.

Caroline laughed heartily.

"Why, it is only my little Jenny braying," she said ; "she wants me to come out and let her go home."

The children went out to quiet the impatient donkey, and when Caroline asked what time it was, she was not surprised that the animal had called her, so bidding Mrs. Cheston good-bye and begging Hattie to come and visit her at Dr. White's, she mounted her little steed and rode away.

CHAPTER X.



E'LL go round by the mill, Hattie; you would like to stop and see Ruth, wouldn't you?"

Grandpa was mounted on his fine bay horse, and by his side was Hattie, perched on a tall but very gentle horse, taking her first lesson on the side saddle.

"Yes, sir," was the answer, and then Hattie directed her attention altogether to the demands of her new situation; she was not exactly afraid, but yet the horse's head did look very big, going up and down as he moved right in front of her, and her hand looked so little to hold the reins. Most children can recall their feelings when they were first put on horseback; they are not those of unmixed pleasure, generally.

Mr. Cheston told the little girl to keep close by his side, so that at any moment he could put out his hand and take hold of her horse's

rein. He walked his horse to suit her gait until she grew more confident.

At the mill he stopped and lifted her down to rest and have a chat with Ruth. Mrs. Foster continued to be sick, and Ruth had been kept very busy waiting on her mother and attending to the family wants. Her thin little face brightened up when she saw Hattie.

"Come in and see mother," she said; "she wants to see you."

"I'm afraid I shall disturb her," said Hattie.

"No; she has had a good night's rest, and feels better this morning since her breakfast."

So Hattie went into a down-stairs room, where poor Mrs. Foster was lying in bed, very pale, but with an expression of patience on her countenance that quite touched Hattie's kind heart. Taking Hattie's hand, she said,

"Ruth tells me she had such a pleasant ride to the Pines with you, my dear, that I have been wanting to see you and thank you for taking her that day. She has but few pleasures, poor child! while I am confined to my room."

"Ruth made it pleasanter for all of us, Mrs.

Foster," said Hattie; "we had a lovely time playing at the old mill in the Pines. But are you not getting better now?"

"The doctor thinks I am, and I believe I am gaining strength slowly; I want to get about again, if it is only to relieve Ruth. You would be surprised if you knew how much she does every day in the way of housekeeping."

"Do you get very tired, Ruth?" asked Hattie.

"Oh yes, very tired, but then I sleep it all off at night, for I do not wait upon mother except through the day; when she was at the worst, a neighbour woman sat up with her, and now she does not need anything in the night, unless it is a drink of water."

"Your dear grandmother has been very kind in sending me nourishing things," said Mrs. Foster, "and I think I am getting better all the sooner for it. That good woman of hers comes over every morning and brings me some little delicacy and inquires how I am getting along."

"How very quietly grandma must do her deeds of kindness!" thought Hattie. "This is the first I have known about sending things to Mrs. Foster." As her visit became longer,

she found that there were others besides the miller's wife who were cheered and comforted by the remembrance and attentions of this good Christian woman, who proved herself a neighbour in the fullest Christian meaning, and made no outward display of benevolence.

Ruth wanted to show her new friend something that would interest her, but she really possessed nothing at that time worth showing except a very playful kitten of exactly the right age to be attractive. While Ruth was going in and out waiting on her mother, Hattie found the time pass quite pleasantly in watching the gambols of this graceful kitten.

Mr. Cheston came back from the mill, where he had been speaking with Mr. Foster, and then he placed Hattie again on her saddle.

"Are you afraid?" Ruth asked.

"Just a little, but I am getting used to the motion; I felt as if I must fall off when I first began to ride."

"Sit square on the saddle," said the miller, "and keep your eyes looking straight between the horse's ears; it don't do to be one-sided or crooked when you're on horseback."

Hattie found this simple piece of advice to be of great service to her in her further ride.

Telling Ruth she would come and see her again soon if she was not sent for to go home, she said "Good-bye!" to all of them, and started off again.

Dr. White's house was rather more than a mile farther on. Hattie had never been there before. A long lane led up to a fine large brick house having a double balcony, enclosed with a massive railing on the first and second stories; there were two gables presented to the front, each having a semicircular window in it, and there were also two front doors that opened on the long piazza beneath the gables.

The house had been built many years previously by a French gentleman of considerable wealth and great taste. Such a garden as he had laid out! Many traces of its beauty were still left, although there had not been riches enough in any family owning the place since his death to keep the garden up to its original design. The square beds for vegetables were immense, bordered with box and intersected by wide gravel-walks; then at each corner of the bed, in most instances, a fruit tree had been planted, trained to a trellis that was made to extend some distance on two

sides. Peaches, pears, and plums looked very inviting, hanging against these trellises, when they were ripe. Long grape arbours extended through another part of the garden, and in a grassy square, given up to itself alone, stood a magnificent pine tree,—a well-grown tree when the place was purchased, and now very old. The pride of the garden, in the estimation of its owner, was this pine tree; he enjoyed its shade and planned many of its improvements while reclining on the grass beneath it, with his delicate cigar and his memories of the château at home, which his new house in a new country was intended to resemble in many respects; but could he have known that immediately after his sudden death the progress of improvement would be checked and his residence never brought to the state of perfection he had intended, he would scarcely have commenced building on so large a scale. When his estate came to be settled, there was not one of the heirs who could claim the whole of his place, and it was therefore sold at a sacrifice and the money divided. Beautiful as it certainly was still, there was a degree of sadness mingled with admiration in the minds of those who wan-

dered among the wide walks and variegated flower-beds.

Caroline's favourite retreat was the second-story balcony extending almost across the entire front of the house. After the arrival of Hattie, she conducted her up stairs and led her out through the door-window in the entry, calling her attention to the very pretty prospect to be seen from this position. There were no mountains nor even hills, to be sure, but the river flowing at the foot of the lawn made a bright feature in the landscape. Somebody has said that a river is a great deal of company in scenery, and it is true. Reflecting as it does the changing colours of the clouds and sky, there is a constant variety about it. Of a bright, clear day the river looks blue, and the waters go rippling along beneath the sunny sky, as if out for a holiday. Then, when a storm is gathering, the black clouds are doubled in the dark and angry-looking water beneath, here and there flecked with foam on the tiny waves; and when, after a thunder-storm, there comes a brilliant sunset, how beautiful are the gorgeous masses of purple, amber, and crimson clouds clustering together in the west, and then gradually part-

ing and covering the sky with fragments of torn fleece, all reflected in the river, which seems filled with clouds as it rolls silently on in the gathering twilight.

Hattie expressed great admiration of Caroline's "view," and then returned into the house, and was conducted to a special little room which Mrs. White had kindly given Caroline to be her playroom while she was making this visit for her health.

"Auntie is very kind to me," she said: "no one could be kinder, but, Hattie, I am lonesome, for all that."

"Are you?" said Hattie; "why, Caroline, I could live all the time with my grandparents and never want any more society."

"Then you did not want me, I suppose," said Caroline, slightly offended.

Hattie was confused; she was too honest to contradict Caroline, remembering that she had rather declined the proposal of asking the little girls to go with her to the Pines, but always finding truth the safest thing to say, she would not swerve from it for the sake of politeness; she replied,

"My grandmother told me that you were here on a visit, and that you had not been

very well, so then I was glad to have you come with us. But what I meant was this: my grandmother is such good company that I cannot feel lonesome when I am there; we have the nicest talks about old times, and besides that, I think I am of some little use to her in going about the house and waiting on her."

"Well, you see, I don't care one bit about old times, and auntie keeps servants who wait on her. I like to go to parties, and to eat ice cream, and—"

"What else?"

"Why, if you must know, I like beaux; there are several young gentlemen—mother calls them boys—who walk home from school with me and carry my books, and then, when I go to a party, I am pretty sure to meet them, and they ask me to dance with them."

"And you like to dance, do you?" said Hattie.

"Indeed I do! There's nothing, hardly, I like so well at a party, except the good supper."

"I like jumping the rope," said Hattie, "and I like to play battledore and shuttlecock. Grandpa plays with me in the long hall; we

kept up two hundred the last time we played, one rainy day. Is this your doll, Caroline?"

"It is one of my dolls, but I believe I am getting too old to play with dolls; they don't seem to interest me as much as they used to. One of the boys laughed at me for playing with dolls, and I have never cared so much about them since."

"Come over and see me when you have leave," said Hattie, "and you will love my grandmother, I am sure; she tells me things that happened when she was young, and she is so good to the poor and sick people."

"Yes; I have heard uncle speak of her. He finds out the good she does when he is visiting his patients; you know he is a doctor."

"I hear them calling us," said Hattie. "I only came for a little visit this time; when I can, I'll come and stay longer, if you feel so lonesome."

Down stairs, Mrs. White had set out some refreshments for Mr. Cheston and Hattie; she was extremely polite in her manners, begging that Hattie would come again frequently to see her niece.

"Poor child!" she said; "after such a lively and exciting winter as she has had, she finds

the country rather lonely, but her health is so much impaired that the doctor thinks she will have to continue with us some time longer, and be as much in the open air as possible, to regain her strength."

Going home, Hattie found she could manage her horse with increased ease, and that she could trust herself to talk a little without having her words broken in two by the jerks, so she said,

"Grandpa, do you think it is a good plan for little girls like Caroline and me to go to parties so much in winter and stay up late dancing, and then eat hot suppers?"

Mr. Cheston smiled at the sober question.

"Don't you think you would like it?" he said.

"No, sir, I know I shouldn't; I should get so tired. Why, I always was ready for my bed by nine o'clock, just as soon as I had learned my lessons."

"I should prefer my children keeping early hours," said Mr. Cheston, "and not having their heads turned with so much gayety, but I do not pretend to judge for the parents of other children; my opinion is, they will see their mistake quite soon enough without my

pointing it out to them, or at all events quite plainly enough."

"If Caroline had been used to the country, she would not feel so lonesome as she does now, I think, grandpa."

"You must teach her to enjoy herself, my dear; have her at the house, and grandma will soon make her see things better worth enjoying than dancing at a large 'children's party.' You would rather dance on the meadow with old Nep, wouldn't you?"

"Indeed I would," said the child, laughing. "There's more fun in it."

"Well, little horsewoman, here we are safe home at last; have you had a pleasant ride?"

"Very pleasant, thank you, sir. Do you think I can learn to manage a horse, grandpa?"

"Why, to be sure I think so; you sat better and steadier coming home than you did going, and you could talk besides, but you must expect to be very stiff to-morrow;" and Mr. Cheston lifted his little girl down to the piazza, bidding her give grandma an account of her experiment in horseback exercise, and then lie down and rest for a while.

CHAPTER XI.



TWO weeks had passed, and there were no signs of the school to which Hattie belonged commencing.

She had received more than one note from her mother, telling her to stay contented where she was until she was sent for, and her grandparents were very glad to have her society, and to teach her and help her recover her strength, as she was rapidly doing.

One morning, just as Hattie was putting flowers into the old-fashioned jars of East India china which stood on the parlour mantel-piece—for the garden was so full of flowers that Hattie found enough to renew the supply in all the vases every morning—Myrtle put her head in at the door to say,

“The little donkey’s coming to see you again, honey,” and went back to her work.

Hattie went to the front door, and saw Caroline riding up the lane very slowly, and

as she came near the gate where Hattie stood waiting for her, she looked more white even than usual.

"I'm glad to see you, Caroline," said Hattie, brightly. "You'll get off and come into the house?"

"My head aches so that I had better not, Hattie. When I came out, auntie thought the fresh air would do me good, but it has not. Only that I was so lonesome and wanted to see you, I would have turned back after the first half mile."

"I'm glad you did not," said Hattie. "Come into the sitting-room and lie on the old sofa. I'll bathe your head, and I know grandma can find something that will do you good."

The prospect was a tempting one, and Caroline got off her donkey at once. Hattie tied it fast to the post, and then the two children went into the shady, quiet room.

Grandma came forward and received poor little Caroline with her motherly kindness.

"Take her hat, my dear, and bring a pillow from up stairs. You'll find a bottle of camphor in my closet, and one of cologne-water too; bring them both with you."

Caroline was laid comfortably on the sofa,

while Hattie commenced her duties as nurse. The child looked very pale and ill, Mrs. Cheston thought.

Hattie bathed her forehead and fanned her, and in a little while grandma came back to the room with some cooling leaves bruised and spread on linen, which she bound on the soles of her feet. The room was made pleasantly dark, and in a quarter of an hour Caroline was in a sweet sleep.

"Poor child!" Mrs. Cheston said to herself; "she must have felt very lonely, to set out on a ride to see Hattie when her head ached so badly." Finding the sleep continued, she withdrew Hattie from the room, partly closing the door.

"How sorry I am for Caroline, grandma!" said Hattie. "She does not seem happy to me."

"No, my dear, she is not happy, I am sure. It seems to me that something connected with her pleasures of last winter has left a sting behind it; she may possibly tell you what it is when she gets better acquainted with you."

They were walking in the garden, and presently Mr. Cheston joined them.

"Would you like another ride on horse-

back this beautiful morning, little girl?" he said.

"Oh yes, sir, indeed I would!" Hattie eagerly replied, and then suddenly remembering her friend in the house, she added, "But I cannot very well go to-day."

"And why not? Are you very busy? I am going, anyhow, on business a few miles off, so that you must not deny yourself thinking I will be put to inconvenience to take you, my dear," Mr. Cheston said.

"If you mean, my child, that it would not be kind to go and leave Caroline," said Mrs. Cheston, "I can make your mind easy about that. You can leave word at Dr. White's that we will keep Caroline until evening, and by that time I think she will be much better. I'll take good care of her if she should wake up before you get back, and I do not think she will."

"Yes, Hattie, you are to get all the strength you can while you have your holiday; so I think you had better come with me, but I do not insist on it," said Mr. Cheston, who could not but admire the little girl's unselfishness, for he knew she would love to go with him.

Grandma turned the scale in favour of

Hattie's going, by saying she would prefer nursing Caroline herself for the next few hours, to avoid excitement, and then she went gladly to get ready.

Mr. Cheston made it convenient to ride round by Dr. White's. Mrs. White was very much concerned that her niece should have gone from home without letting her know how very sick she felt; she said she thought the fresh air would soon relieve a trifling headache, and therefore indulged her in her wish to visit Hattie.

"No harm will come of it, I think," said Mr. Cheston. "We thought a good sleep would be the best thing for her, and if she wakes up refreshed, she and Hattie will have all the afternoon to talk over their important affairs, and in the mean time I must give my little scholar her horseback lesson."

"I am very grateful for your kindness," said Mrs. White, "and will try to be satisfied, though I regret her going because of the trouble she is giving."

"Please say not one word of that kind, madam," said Mr. Cheston. "You surely know my good wife is never more suited with her employment than when she is nursing."

Mrs. White smiled, knowing how true that was, and called out, just as they were bidding her "Good-morning," that she would send over for Jenny, and her uncle would bring Caroline home in the evening.

This matter being comfortably settled, Hattie gave herself up to the enjoyment of her ride and to the instructions of her grandfather. She was very quick in comprehending what he told her, and felt herself gaining confidence in controlling her horse every moment.

CHAPTER XII.

CAROLINE continued to lie quietly, as if asleep, for some time, either Mrs. Cheston or Myrtle going frequently to the half-open door to listen, when all of a sudden she cried out in her sleep. They were both with her instantly. Mrs. Cheston asked Myrtle to open the shutter and let in more light; then bending over the little girl, she was troubled with the expression of her eyes, which were now wide open and had an excited look.

“What is the matter, my dear?” said grandma. “Have you had an unpleasant dream?”

Caroline closed her eyes again, and a frown came on her forehead.

“Oh yes—yes,” she said; “it was that dreadful thing!”

“Get me some water, Myrtle, please,” said Mrs. Cheston, “and I’ll give her a composing draught.”

Caroline drank it, but seemed feverish and far from well; after a little while she seemed more like herself, however, and said:

"I must go home now, Mrs. Cheston. I am not well enough to play with Hattie."

"Is your head better, my child?"

"Yes, ma'am; bathing it did it good. It does not ache much now."

"Well, lie still a little while longer: you had better not move yet; and I will sit by you all the time and keep bad dreams away."

The child languidly laid her head down again on the pillow. "I shall never forget it long enough to keep the dream from coming," she said.

"Forget what, my dear?" said Mrs. Cheston, caressing the little sad, worn-looking face.

"Something that happened last winter that I did not tell about, ma'am."

"Not your mother, dear?"

"No, ma'am; I did not tell mother, because I thought she would not let me go to parties any more, and besides, she would have found out who frightened me, and made a time, and—"

Mrs. Cheston waited in silence; she felt

satisfied her conjecture had been the right one, but whether she ought to win the secret from the child, while her own mother was kept in ignorance, she could not decide at once.

Caroline slept again, under the effect of the composing draught and in the stillness of the room. After about two hours' rest she awoke much better and without fever.

Hattie had returned in the mean time with Mr. Cheston, but was requested not to come near her little friend for the present.

"I feel much better now, Mrs. Cheston," said Caroline; "I'm so very much obliged to you for taking care of me. I've been wanting to come to this sweet, quiet place ever since the first time I saw it, you are so kind to me."

"Do you think so, my child? I love children very much, and they generally love me, I find. But now you are ready for some light nourishment, and Myrtle is only waiting for you to wake up to bring it to you."

Caroline sat up on the sofa, while Myrtle brought the delicate chicken broth she had made, and was delighted to find how much it was relished.

"That child wants looking after, mistress," was her remark afterward. "They think so much of fashion and gayety where she's been living that they've pretty near left the life slip out of her, poor little thing!"

"She seems to me a good deal the worse for her winter of excitement," said Mrs. Cheston, and then she got her knitting and took her seat again by the sofa, saying but little, yet by her cheerful, serene expression giving Caroline a pleasant sensation of being taken care of and watched over kindly.

The little girl lay for some time with her eyes closed, until, at length, her friend noticed that she put up her handkerchief to wipe away the quiet tears as they stole from under the lids.

"My little patient ought to be smiling now, instead of weeping," said Mrs. Cheston, bending over to kiss the beautiful face, for Caroline was a remarkably pretty child.

"Oh, Mrs. Cheston, please forgive me! I don't want to cry, but I can't help it. You don't know how different your home is from what I have been used to all winter, and all my life; it is so sweet, so good, somehow. I feel safe here; nobody could frighten me here."

"Has something distressed you, Caroline, that you cannot forget? If you would tell your mother, she would probably feel sorry, and help you to get over it."

Caroline lay thinking a little while longer, and then said,

"It seems such a foolish thing to be frightened at, but will you laugh at me, Mrs. Cheston, if I tell you?"

"Laugh at you, dear? Certainly not. If it will make you feel better to talk about it, I will listen, and perhaps I can help you to forget the trouble, whatever it was."

"Then I will tell you. I was at a party near the end of the winter, and a little girl got vexed with me because I danced with somebody that she had wanted to dance with. Never mind about that, only she told me she would be revenged on me for taking her partner; she got her brother to help her. When we were going home, I happened to be the last one to leave the dressing-room; just as I had gone out into the entry, where it was rather dark, this brother of hers jumped out from the boys' dressing-room opposite with a skull in his hands—an awful skull with two lights behind the eyes. He held it up before my

face, and I screamed, for I was so scared I did not know what to do."

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Cheston; "I don't wonder you were startled. Did no one come to you?"

"The boy scolded me for making a noise, and then ran off as hard as he could, for fear of being found out, and I was afraid to say anything; the girl who had been waiting on us came to see what was the matter, and I did not dare to tell her. She bathed my face, and said I looked white, but she did not know the reason, for it was all done in a minute. Was I foolish to get frightened at a skull, Mrs. Cheston? It looked very dreadful."

"You could not help it, my dear. You had been excited with your evening's gayety, and were tired and nervous, I suppose. You would have been better off in bed and asleep at twelve o'clock, my dear child, with peaceful dreams. And not yet eleven years old!" Mrs. Cheston added in her thoughts.

"I wish I could forget that night," said poor little Caroline. "But the moment I am left to myself at night I see that skull grinning at me everywhere. I was always afraid of such things."

"But where did the boy get it from?" said Mrs. Cheston.

"Out of the office down stairs, ma'am; his father was a physician," replied Caroline.

"You would have got over it better if you had frankly told your mother the next day, my child, even if she had 'made a time,' as you say, and it would have been much better if you had not gone to any more evening parties, but your nervous system had rest afterward. I hope it is not too late yet. I will do all I can for you while you are in this neighbourhood, and fresh country air will be a good medicine. Try not to think about it, dear; you are sick, independent of this fright, though that has had a great deal to do in bringing you to such a weak condition."

Just then Myrtle came to speak to her mistress.

"Would you like to see Hattie now, dear? or do you not feel well enough?"

"I would like to see her, ma'am."

"Then tell her she may come in, Myrtle."

Hattie had provided herself with a bunch of lovely flowers, which gratified her friend, and then she told her all the little incidents of her ride, together with the message sent by

her aunt that she was to remain until her uncle came for her in the evening. Pleasant conversation drove away the painful subject of Caroline's thoughts, and in the evening she was able to join the family at the tea-table, and enjoyed the meal.

When Dr. White came in his gig to take her home, Mrs. Cheston, who knew him well, took him into the library and held a serious conversation with him. She told him of Caroline's nervous condition, arising from a fright in the winter, and the doctor seemed quite relieved to hear of it.

"I thought," he said, "there was something more connected with her ill-health than I have been informed of, for there is but little actual disease; the child has a very excitable nervous temperament, and is just such a child as should have been kept free from any mental disturbance; early hours and quiet living were needful in her case. I will take her out with me in my rides round the country, and let her have fresh air and change of scene."

"Perhaps it would be better," said Mrs. Cheston, "if she were to have a young companion staying with her for a while, that she might not be alone at night."

"That is true," said Dr. White. "I will send for a little niece of mine who will be safe and good company for her, and who will be glad to leave the city in the hot weather. We get a little selfish as we grow older, Mrs. Cheston, and like the quiet of our own homes so well that we forget to invite young persons to gather round us and enjoy the same pure air and peaceful domestic pleasures."

"But we must not grow selfish," said his old friend, smiling in her benevolent way.

"Ah! I should not include you when I use that term, but I fear we are not all so mindful of the needs of those around us as you and your excellent husband are known to be," said Dr. White, sincerely.

"If I have called your attention to the wants of this poor little fashionable child before it is too late, doctor, I shall feel very glad," said Mrs. Cheston. "It is time enough to begin our struggle with the pomps and vanities of this wicked world when we are old enough to know something about their danger, but to see a child like this steering her own way amid such scenes is to me painful and startling."

"Times are greatly changed since we were

young," said the doctor (his present wife was much younger than himself). "I confess I am a good deal surprised myself when Mrs. White reads me some of the letters she receives from her relations in the city; they keep it up there. But, really, I must be getting home. Come, Carrie, child, are you ready to start?"

Very much better, both in body and mind, than when she came in the morning, Caroline kissed her kind friends good-bye, and was seated in the gig beside her uncle for her ride home. Mrs. Cheston had done one of her many unobtrusive deeds of charity that day in opening the mystery that had seemed to attend Caroline's ill-health; from that time her case received such treatment as it demanded.

CHAPTER XIII.



LETTER came from Hattie's mother which turned the tide of affairs quite materially. The child had been kept in a state of rather uncomfortable suspense in regard to her teacher's return, and her own, as a consequence; almost every morning when she gathered her breakfast flowers she said, as she placed them on the table,

"There, grandma! make much of them, for maybe you'll have no little girl to gather them to-morrow."

She was in constant expectation that her visit would end, and though still ambitious about her place in the classes and interested in her school, she did greatly desire to stay a little longer where she was so entirely happy: and this was natural. She thought also that her presence was in some way—she could not understand why—a comfort to her grandmother. Through the day, when her attention

was constantly occupied in some other way, the subject of being called back to school did not disturb her so much.

Well, she received the letter. All the while she was reading it grandma was observing the changing colour and delighted expression; she also had been written to and requested to report what the effect of the letter was on Hattie.

"Well, dear?" grandma said, at last.

"I don't know what to say first, grandma," exclaimed Hattie, "I want to say so much. Do you want me to stay any longer?"

"Begin at the beginning, little chick," said grandpa; "what does the letter say?"

"Oh, it says such a nice thing, grandpa! My teacher is not coming back this summer, and there will be no more school!"

"So you call that very nice, do you?"

"Oh, for one reason, grandpa."

"And what may that reason be? When a little girl is just getting on smoothly with her grammar, geography, and so on, it ought to be for a good reason when she likes being stopped short off and left in ignorance."

"Grandpa, I believe you are just teasing me, and that you know all about it," said

Hattie, kissing him; "the reason is that if there is no school, I may stay here the whole summer, and I need not feel as if I was being idle on purpose."

"Ah! now I begin to understand. But you are quite sure we would like to keep you?"

"That is what I want grandma to tell me," said Hattie, putting her arms round the old lady's neck.

Grandma drew her down on her lap and kissed her. "It is a shame," she said, "to keep you in suspense another moment, darling. I have had a letter too, and I think I can make your mother's mind entirely easy about your being glad to stay with us all summer; she knows how very much we love to keep you."

"It is very important that you should go on with your riding lessons, Hattie," said Mr. Cheston; "we shall have to put up with your company for the sake of your learning to ride."

"Ah, grandpa!" said Hattie, laughing; "if you did not want me to stay, you would not mind about my riding lessons; but indeed I will try to be just as good as I can be. I am so glad mother gives me leave to stay, and you will let me."

"Come here and give me a kiss, then," said grandpa; "we will take a good long ride some day soon, you and I: there are some things I want to show you away off in the Pines; and I think the air up there will do you a great deal of good."

"Grandpa, do you think Caroline could go, too, on her little Jenny?"

"We'll see; she'll have to be stronger than she is now before she can go so far. But she shall not be forgotten, my child; we'll attend to her," replied Mr. Cheston.

"Oh, there comes Ruth!" exclaimed Hattie, and jumping down from her grandpa's knee, she ran out to the head of the lane to meet her and bring her in.

Such a dear, gentle, thoughtful-looking child as Ruth was! Her years had not yet come up to the mature expression on her face; she might have passed for fourteen years old, yet she was only ten,—very near the age of Hattie.

She made her polite little curtsy when she entered the room, and went up to Mrs. Cheston.

"My mother told me to bring this loaf of milk bread, Mrs. Cheston," she said, "and

ask if you would please accept it, with her best respects."

"I will accept it very gladly, my dear," replied Mrs. Cheston, cordially, "and I am much obliged to your mother for remembering my liking for this kind of bread, and for remembering me."

"How could she help remembering you, Mrs. Cheston, when you have been so good to her through her sickness?" said the little girl.

"Oh, never mind that, my dear. But tell me, Ruth,—has your mother become strong enough to make bread? I had no idea she was gaining so fast."

Ruth smiled, but looked a little afraid that the bread would lose its value if she told the truth about it; she answered, however, with simplicity,

"Mother is not strong enough yet, ma'am, to do it, but I have been making it for a good many weeks now, and mother thought this was the best I had ever made, and she told me I might bring a loaf to you, to reward me."

"Why, Ruth Foster," exclaimed Hattie, "did you really make this beautiful white bread all by yourself? It smells as sweet and nice as if it was cake."

"It is not much trouble to make bread," said Ruth. "Mother taught me how to make yeast, and when I have good yeast, I just set the sponge over-night, and make up the bread early next morning."

"That sounds all very simple," said Mrs. Cheston, "and as if anybody could make good bread, but yet everybody cannot, or does not, do it; there is much judgment required about the degree of lightness before it is made up and put into the pans for baking."

"Mother used to look at it, at first, and give me her directions, but I have learned to manage it now for myself, and the baking too. When she was so sick, I did not like to trouble her, so I tried very hard to learn the way myself," said Ruth.

"No wonder the child has such an old look on her face," thought grandpa.

"Now, little housekeeper," said Mrs. Cheston, "cannot you lay off your sun-bonnet and spend the rest of the day with Hattie?"

"Thank you, ma'am; I should like to do it very much, but mother told me she could only spare me an hour this time."

"Then we must try and fix some day before long for a visit from you; your mother is

really getting better now, I think; she will soon be able to give you more time for play," said Mrs. Cheston.

"I am so happy doing my work about the house and taking care of the little children that I don't seem to think much about playing, except to amuse them; we have lovely times together about sundown, when supper is over and the work is done. Mother is so cheerful now; she plays with us sometimes."

"Plays with you?" said Hattie, surprised; "why, I thought she was confined to her bed?"

"So she is," said Ruth; "I didn't mean that she plays blindman's buff, or tag, or anything like that, but she gives us riddles to guess and puzzles to find out; we call it play."

"Your mother has borne her trouble very patiently," said Mrs. Cheston; "some mothers would have fretted themselves into still greater illness if they had been laid aside, as she has been, with a young family to see after; but the secret of it all is, she is a true Christian. She does not repine or murmur, because she knows that God has given her the best of all gifts, —the gift of his own dear Son, and if he

sees it to be best for her, he can make her well again."

"Mother loves to read the Bible," said Ruth, "and she has us all by her bedside every night, and says a prayer for us after she has heard us say ours."


"That is very pleasant for you all," said grandma; "how thankful you ought to be for such a good mother!"

"Indeed we are thankful, ma'am; we are so anxious to get her well again, and to have her about the house everywhere. But, Mrs. Cheston, is my hour gone? I think I ought to go back now."

"You will have time to go to the garden first, my dear, and Hattie will gather some of her prettiest flowers for you to take home to your mother."

So the two little girls went out to gather the sweet damask roses for Mrs. Foster, and after that Ruth went home, much delighted with her visit and desiring to know more of Hattie.

CHAPTER XIV.

 HE weather had been generally clear and pleasant since Hattie had been a guest at Fernwood. But one day there came an easterly storm, which, although it was in the month of July, proved very chilly and disagreeable. Hattie came down stairs to breakfast a little late, the morning was so dark ; but everybody was late.

Grandpa came in presently, after having taken off his wet cloak in the kitchen.

"Well, Hattie," he said, "you ought to be glad you're not a cow this rainy morning."

The child laughed : "Why, grandpa?"

"I have just had quite a busy time getting the animals put under shelter ; the storm came up early this morning, and they were all out of doors, so you may imagine they got wetter than they wanted to be before they were driven into the cattle-sheds."

"They are under shelter now?" asked grandma.

"Oh yes. Benny and I attended to them; George had his hands full with the sheep. However, now I know they are all right, I can enjoy my breakfast."

As soon as breakfast and prayers were over, Mr. Cheston was off again with his cloak and umbrella; he liked to see to everything himself, and being a very active man and in excellent health, it was natural that he should. Hattie helped her grandmother, as usual, in washing up the china and silver, looking forward in her thoughts to the long wet day, in which nothing could happen that would specially interest her.

"Do you feel strong and well this morning, my dear?" Mrs. Cheston said, presently, as she was putting away the last of the cups and saucers.

"Oh yes, grandma; I feel perfectly well. I slept like a top last night."

"Then I think I'll get you to help me this rainy morning to polish up the spare silver in the closet; would you mind doing it?"

"No, ma'am; I would be glad to do it. I was wondering what I should do for you when the cups and dishes were all washed and put away."

"It is a way of mine," said grandma, "to do up odd jobs and things that are of no particular importance, if any other duties are pressing, on rainy days, and I generally try to get the silver cleaned at such times; you know it will get tarnished standing in the closet."

When grandma was ready, Hattie brought out the large coffee-pot and several other pieces of plate, and began to help as she was directed.

The coffee-pot attracted her attention, and of course she had to ask questions about it. It was very tall and richly embossed, but entirely unlike any silver of modern times. Its history dated back several generations before Mrs. Cheston, and it was believed to have come from England with the first of the family who settled at the old place.

Hattie became greatly interested in making it shine, and then turned her attention to other pieces, listening with much delight to little family anecdotes connected with some of them. A silver cup given to the old lady herself when she was a baby, with the initials of the giver's name on it, pleased the child greatly.

"To think that you were ever a baby, grandma!" she exclaimed, merrily.

"Yes, dear, it seems strange enough now, but I hope I may be taken home before there is any danger of my becoming one the second time, or, in other words, growing childish; I would rather die, if it is my Father's will, while my faculties are sound."

"Oh, grandma," said Hattie, "don't let us talk about anything so mournful."

"If you live to be as old as I am, dear, you will find the subject very often in your thoughts. I am getting nearer and nearer to the end of my pilgrimage, but I am not unhappy about it. Beyond this earthly home which I enjoy so much 'there is a land of pure delight'—you know the hymn, Hattie; that is a land I think of very often."

Hattie felt too deeply to talk with her grandmother on this subject, so she said nothing in reply, but went on with her work, thinking how she could make her dear grandma talk of cheerful things. Myrtle, coming in just then with some more hot water, observed the serious expression on her face.

"We can't get down to the spring-house this morning, you and me—too rainy; George

has to bring up the things. Never mind; missy shall have something good for dessert to-day, if it is rainy."

"I don't mind the weather now, Myrtle," replied Hattie. "I did when I first got up, but I have plenty of work, and that keeps me from thinking about it."

When Myrtle had gone, Hattie said,

"Grandma, you began to tell me, one day, how it was mother learned to be a good house-keeper, and something stopped us; won't you tell me now?"

"It was the first day you came, wasn't it?"

"Yes, ma'am, and you said she was very fond of reading."

"It is a long story; are you sure you would like to hear it all through?"

"I should like to hear it, if it will not tire you to tell me, grandma."

"I think you wanted to know what it was that influenced your mother to give up her former habits and attend to household duties, and as I remember well how it was brought about, I'll tell you the story. If you get tired of listening, you must tell me."

"No danger, grandma; please begin," Hattie said as she rubbed away at the silver.

CHAPTER XIV.

MOUR mother continued, even after school-days, to be so much taken up with reading and writing—for she was fond of writing verses too—that I began to despair of making anything of her but a regular blue-stocking. I was disappointed, I must own, because housekeeping was considered a most important and lady-like branch of learning in my day, and I desired to bring up my daughter in the same way my mother had brought me up. Now and then some little incident would arise leading your mother to see that she had really tried me too far, and then she would turn over quite a new leaf, and be wonderfully attentive for a week or two, or at any rate until the next new book came into the house. But the occasion on which she was so much mortified that she improved for good and all was this that I am going to tell you.

“We were to have some friends to dinner:—

they were very dear friends as well as relations of mine, and I desired to spend as much of my time as possible in the parlour. At the same time, I wanted to entertain them well at the dinner-table. I had a poor servant in the kitchen, which made it all the worse. We were living in the city then, your grandpa and I. I felt no fear of not being able to please my cousins, who were a little particular about their eating, if I could only attend to both places at once, parlour and kitchen. 'Now,' I thought to myself, 'I'll find out what value there is in all that I have taught Lizzie. I think if she chooses she can relieve me of much care to-day.' So very early in the morning, remembering a fondness these cousins had in our young days for my chicken pies, made after the rule of a celebrated pastry-cook who taught a class of young ladies herself, I hastened my work in order to make one of these pies.

"I succeeded to my own satisfaction, and intended telling them that the pie contained sentiment as well as chicken, being a remembrance of our youthful achievements at the pastry-cook's school, which we had all attended together."

"Yes, grandma, and there was a tulip in the top of the pie. I know about those pies; mother always makes a tulip, too, out of puff-paste."

"I warrant her," said the old lady, laughing, "but I should think she could hardly do it yet without being reminded of that day in particular."

"Did anything happen, grandma?"

"I will tell you, my dear—not to make you reflect on your dear mother, but just as a sort of beacon for your own guidance in such matters. My cousins—three of them—came early to spend a long day with me; they were from the country, and were visiting in the city. I was delighted, and after I had settled them comfortably in the parlour with their work, I hastened to the kitchen and gave the necessary directions as to the dinner to the servant, who I knew would do her best; but I could not trust her to bake my pie, so I called Lizzie. I heard her book go down on the sofa in the dining-room when she jumped up to come to me. This rather worried me, because I remembered that the 'Scottish Chiefs' was then her absorbing delight, and 'Wallace' was hard to leave.

“Well, she came down, poor child! looking not any too anxious to put herself in the kitchen.

“‘Lizzie,’ I said, ‘my cousins have come, and I want to sit with them as much as I can. I would be particularly obliged to you, dear, as you are not so anxious to be with them as I am, if you will take my place for a while in attending to the oven.’

“‘What is it, mother, that is to be baked?’ Lizzie said.

“‘I have made a nice chicken-pie,’ I said, ‘and the oven is exactly right for it now; will you see that the fire does not get too hot, or that Mary does not put more wood in just at the wrong time?’

“‘To be sure, I will, mother,’ she answered me, very bright and cheerful; ‘is that all? I expected you would want me to do fifty things to-day for these remarkable visitors.’

“I did not quite fancy the way she spoke of my favourite cousins: they were very dear to me, through a lifelong association of tastes and habits; however, I remembered she was young and thoughtless, and I got over this little speech.”

“Dear grandma!” thought Hattie; “I

wonder what there is she wouldn't forgive and get over?"

"I replied, 'Well, my dear, there were many things I would have been glad to have you take off my hands, but I knew you were engrossed with your new book, so I got up early and did a good deal, and now I have nothing to make me uneasy except the baking of this pie. Mary has some beefsteaks to broil, but those she understands.' I little thought, when I said this, what a favour it was that Mary did understand that much toward making out the dinner."

"Why, grandma, surely nothing happened after mother promised she would do what you wanted her to?" and Hattie looked as if she thought there must be a mistake somewhere; but revering both her mother and grandmother, she could not imagine where the mistake lay.

Again Mrs. Cheston said: "Do not think of this little incident in the way of blaming your mother, Hattie; she was very young, and so fond of reading. However—I don't seem to get on with my story at all, somehow—I gave Lizzie a kiss for her good-nature and good intentions, and wiped my red face after

fussing over the oven, and went into the parlour again. I almost skipped in, I might say, for I was not very old then, and when I was in the company of persons whom I sincerely loved and trusted, I gave myself up to them with a sort of enthusiasm. We had so much to talk about we did not know what subject to choose first. Polly, the eldest, said, 'I feel more like talking over our old happy days at Englewood than anything else.'

"Englewood had been their maiden home, where I had spent many and many a week on visits to them. I should think they could scarcely have been more attached to it than I was. I must tell you about that dear old place some other time, if you will remind me."

"I will remind you, grandma, never fear. But please go on about that day; what did mother do?"

"I was sitting in the parlour, happy as a queen, talking and listening, determined to shake off any feeling of anxiety about dinner.

"Lizzie had spoken to my cousins for a few minutes, so that I knew she had not been negligent toward them; altogether, I was quite at my ease. Once, in the course of the morning, when I handed a basket of my very best cake

with lemonade, I made some remark about spoiling their appetites, and then Cousin Patty said,

“‘Now, Maria, I just want to say one thing to you, dear: don’t take any pains to get things for our dinner to-day at all extra; we’ll take whatever you happen to have in the house, if it’s nothing but bread and butter and a cup of tea. We want your company, cousin, and never mind about good eating to-day.’

“‘Oh,’ I answered, ‘you need not be uneasy,’ thinking of the pleasant surprise in store for them, and the ‘sentiment.’ ‘I shall not take the least trouble; what little I have got ready for you can be taken care of by Lizzie just as well as myself, and I am going to stay and enjoy your society all the time. You know we live very plainly, and people who come to see us must have some other motive than to get niceties.’

“Now, Hattie, this was my conceit and pride. I knew I was considered to keep a particularly good table, and that some of my friends praised me very much for it. I cared for the reputation chiefly for the sake of my husband; when he praised my doings in that line, I felt

gratified. But I was not talking honestly all this time, and, what was more, I despised myself for it. Did you ever think, my dear, how it would sound if two voices could be heard coming out of our lips at the same time?"

"No, grandma; how do you mean?"

"This way for instance, darling. One voice: 'Good-morning, Mrs. Jones. I am delighted to see you coming in sociably without ringing, it seems so neighbourly.'

"Another voice: 'Good-morning, Mrs. Jones. I should think you might know better than to intrude on me so early without ringing the bell, and find me in this old dress sweeping the room.'

"Or this way: 'Certainly, Mrs. Smith; I can lend you that book now you were asking for: it has just come home. You are very welcome to it, and I'm sorry it was lent when you first asked for it.'

"Another voice: 'Mrs. Smith, you can afford to buy all the books you care to read. I wish you had not asked for this, for I know your children will tear half the leaves out before I see it again.'"

"Is there so much deceit in the world, grandma?" Hattie said, a little sadly. "It

seems to me I shall never know when to trust people who tell me things."

"You will find as you grow older, dear, who is to be trusted and who is not; sometimes it takes a long lifetime to find out the many turns and windings of a deceitful human heart. Young persons, when they have once been mistaken in their confidence, are apt to go to the extreme of doubting, and never allow themselves to believe in anybody again, but that is wrong, Hattie. You must put confidence in some one; if you could not trust your mother and father, for instance, what would become of you, dear child?"

"And if I did not trust you, dear grandma, too; everybody trusts *you*, though."

"I am in the habit of speaking my mind out pretty plainly, my dear. I don't like false words of any kind, not even the polite falsehoods of every-day use. I can sometimes hardly be civil, because I am afraid of tumbling over a 'fib,' as they call it. I call it a lie. The Lord despises and abhors lying lips, my child, and when we try to please him in our daily life, we cannot practice deceit."

"That's the way it seems to me, grandma," said Hattie. "I do not want to say things

that are not true, but don't you think it is very hard to keep from it, sometimes?"

"I know the temptation is very great, frequently, to say words out of politeness that are not sincerely true, but we ought always to endeavour to be both polite and truthful as far as possible, and if either must be sacrificed, let it be politeness, not truth."

"Grandma," said Hattie, with a merry laugh, "what is the reason we seem to get no farther on about the day you had your cousins to dinner?"

"Don't you know, my dear," said Mrs. Cheston, laughing in her turn, "that old women are wonderfully fond of rambling on in their talk, and wandering away from the subject they begin with?"

"Now I'll try and finish, for it's getting toward noon, and your grandpa will be coming home presently. Time flew by very rapidly that morning, we had so much to say to each other; and before I thought of its being two o'clock, I heard my husband's latch-key in the front door. I was just jumping up to go and see if everything was in order for dinner, when I remembered that for this day I was absolved from care. Lizzie had engaged to

see that another leaf was added to the table and a fine table-cloth put on, and all the small matters that my housekeeping pride had suggested. It added greatly to my self-importance to let my cousins see how much confidence I could place in my young daughter, for they already knew just what sort of cook I had in the kitchen, and that, if it had not been for Lizzie, I could not have spent such a leisurely morning with them.

"After my husband had greeted our friends with his usual cordial manner, he turned to me and said,

" 'Do you know, Maria, that it is almost three o'clock? I was detained by a gentleman on business, and I had hoped you would not wait for me.'

"Now, two o'clock was our dinner-hour. At that, Hattie, my heart began to beat a little anxiously, and I made a quick escape from the room. The dining-room was up stairs. I went there first, thinking to find Lizzie tired out and impatient about being kept so long on the watch.

"The 'Scottish Chiefs' again went down on the sofa, this time with a bang, and Lizzie sprang up at the opening of the door.

“ ‘What is the matter, my child?’ I asked, for she looked bewildered. ‘Father has only just come in, and I had no idea it was so late. Is the pie nicely baked, Lizzie?’

“ ‘What pie, mother?’ she said.

“ ‘I asked you, Lizzie, to relieve me from care to-day, and to attend to the oven for me; have you not done so?’

“ ‘Oh, mother, mother!’ she cried; ‘what will you say to me? I forgot the baking entirely!’

“ ‘Lizzie,’ I said, trying to command myself, ‘you don’t mean to tell me that this book has so completely absorbed you that all my requests have passed out of your memory? and yet I see that you have not got out the right table-cloth, and everything on the table is just as Mary puts it every day. Well, I’ll go into the kitchen and see what else is in store for me.’ ”

“ ‘Poor dear grandma!’ said Hattie, tenderly, as if it was that very day things were going so adverse; “I do hope everything was not ruined?”

“ ‘Now, Hattie dear, understand. I am not making a serious matter of all this merely because of the mortification to my own pride,

but because I want to tell you how it affected my daughter, and also because I do want you to see, before you become too old to profit by it, how important it is for young girls to grow up with an interest in learning to manage a house in all respects. It seems to me that in these days it is considered of no consequence if a girl knows nothing whatever of house-keeping when she gets married. We no longer have servants who know their places and take pride in keeping them through good behaviour; it is therefore all the more necessary that the mistress should know enough to instruct her servants, and sometimes to put her own hand to the work when she is suddenly left with no servant at all."

"Well, grandma," said Hattie, earnestly, "how did it all end? I should think mother would just have gone up to her room and cried like everything."

"The next thing I did, my dear, was done too hastily; before I went into the kitchen, even, I sent for my husband to come to me, and poured out my troubles about the ruined dinner.

"'Are you sure there is nothing left, Maria?' he asked. 'I have no doubt there

will be something saved from the wreck, but, at any rate, I can give you some little comfort, I think, unless—'

" 'How do you mean, dear?' I asked; 'you did not arrange anything before you went out?'

" 'No, but I knew you made a great festival of having these cousins to visit you, so I thought I would contribute a rarity to the dinner which I remembered they could not easily procure where they live. I stopped as I went down this morning at Jemmy Parsons's oyster establishment, and ordered a pair of canvas-back ducks, cooked in his best style, and sent up a little after two. Did they come?'

" 'Oh how kind that was!' exclaimed Hattie; 'weren't you glad, grandma?'

" 'Glad! indeed I was, and grateful, too. Then I went to the kitchen; the pie, of course, was burnt and dried up: Mary had managed the other things pretty well; but there were the ducks, all right, in the heating apparatus they came in.'

" 'Then you had a nice dinner, after all, grandma?' said Hattie.

" 'Thanks to my dear husband, I had, my

dear, and the dessert was all I meant it to be, but my vanity received a severe blow that day, for instead of boasting in a quiet way, as I had expected to do, of the skill of my daughter and her excellent management, I had to apologize for the common though clean table linen, the ordinary service of china and cutlery, and everything else that made it appear as if I did not think such guests worth taking any trouble about."

"And your little speech about the sentiment in the chicken-pie, grandma; what a pity you could not make that!"

"I was a good deal cut down, Hattie, just by that very thing, though my cousins kindly said they would take the will for the deed. But my poor heart was too much filled with conceit and self-complacency at that time. The pride I indulged in because I was able to furnish my parlour and dining-room in a style rather beyond most of my friends, and because I could open the doors of my pantry and china closet to show the treasures they contained, was sinful as well as foolish. That pride afterward had a fall."

"Did my dear mother try after that not to read so much, grandma?"

“That was the turning-point, my dear,—the end of my story that I have been aiming at. She learned from that day to control her love for reading and keep it within bounds. She never afterward gave me cause to regret that I had placed important household matters in her charge, and judging from the condition I always find her house in when I visit her, I think I may safely say that she grew up an accomplished housekeeper.

“To earn that title requires some sacrifice of time and of taste, frequently, but if conscience is made to support us in the performance of its various duties, there is no reason to consider the calling an unpleasant one; and the amount of comfort that women have it in their power to bestow on husbands, sons, and brothers by taking some pains in domestic matters ought to give them motive for exertion.”

“Grandma,” said Hattie, after sitting quietly thinking for a few minutes, “what became of ‘The Scottish Chiefs’?”

“The book came very near being banished to the garret forthwith, my dear. Your mother felt so disgusted with herself that she blamed the interesting story rather unjustly,

for at the time of its first appearance agreeable works of fiction were not so plentiful as they are now, and this story was considered quite remarkable."

"Then she did not send it away?"

"No; I told her that, having gone so far through the book, she might as well finish it, if she would read it in leisure moments. She did so, but felt far less anxiety as to the fate of the Scottish hero than she did at the beginning, when she allowed herself to be unwisely absorbed by him."

"Grandma, you remember I told you that mother offered to take me to the menagerie on my birth-day instead of coming here?"

"Yes, dear, I remember, and how pleased I was with you for preferring Fernwood."

"Well, I would rather have heard you tell me this little story about mother than to have seen the biggest lion there was there, and to have had a ride on the elephant besides," Hattie said, with great emphasis.

"You must tell mother so when you go home; we have pleasant times together, you and I, and there is no better listener to my stories of old times than my little Hattie. But the rain seems to have stopped, and I

think I hear wheels; is grandpa coming in, dear?"

"Yes, ma'am; he is driving in at the gate, but I don't see any canvas-back ducks with him," said Hattie, drily.

"Oh, you little puss. I shall hear of those ducks sometimes after this when I don't expect it, but you must remember they are not in season now."

CHAPTER XV.

BATTIE had heard nothing more of Caroline after the day she had passed at Mrs. Cheston's for several days. The roads had been too wet after the storm to make driving pleasant, but on the first fine day after the roads dried up, Mr. Cheston drove out a few miles with his wife and Hattie, and on their return they stopped at Dr. White's.

To their surprise and sorrow, they were told that Caroline had been confined to her bed ever since her uncle brought her home that night. A fever had set in which they were afraid would become typhoid in its character. The child wandered very much in her mind, frequently referring to something painful, her aunt said, and shuddering at the remembrance. She sometimes also mentioned the name of Albert as if fear were connected with the name. Mrs. White, in telling this to Mrs. Cheston, begged her to give her any

information she might have that could throw light on this mystery.

Mrs. Cheston hesitated a moment, but decided that Caroline's secret must be made known, or her health might suffer beyond all hope of remedy. She therefore told the story of the shock Caroline had received at the party.

Mrs. White exclaimed: "Now I understand it all!" and mentioned further particulars of Caroline's broken, incoherent talk.

"Poor dear child!" she said; "no wonder she has been so pale and languid. This trouble has preyed upon her in the night when she has been alone. Dr. White has written to invite his little niece to keep her company, but I suppose the storm or something has prevented her from coming yet. But as to that wicked boy, his name shall be made known to my sister, for he must be found and punished."

"I agree with you," said Mrs. Cheston; "he deserves punishment richly, and it is my belief that there are many instances where timid, nervous children are terrified in some way among themselves, and are frightened into keeping the matter secret afterward, just

as poor Caroline has been—in some cases with like consequences. I hope Dr. White does not consider her dangerously ill?”

“At present he does not; her worst symptoms are disappearing. He has written for her mother to come out, however; we hope good care and nursing may bring her up again. I am very sorry Caroline did not tell all to her mother at the first; her illness might have been prevented.”

“I am truly thankful,” said Mrs. Cheston, “that something impelled her to make it known to me the day she was so sick at our house; perhaps another time she would have resisted the desire to unburden her mind.”

Caroline’s mother was not the kind of parent who would be likely to receive her child’s free confidence, being very much engrossed with the rapid changes in fashions of all sorts, and satisfied with providing good teachers and good servants to whom her children could be entrusted without interfering with her own important affairs.

It was thought best that Hattie should not see her little friend, and when she left the house, her feelings were very sad concerning her. Partly on that account, grandpa sug-

gested stopping at the mill. Ruth saw the carriage, and came running out to the road.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Cheston, "and how are you getting on to-day?"

"Oh, nicely, Mrs. Cheston; won't you please to come in and see mother? She's up and dressed and sitting in her own chair in the sitting-room."

There was a ring of gladness in the child's voice that was delightful to hear. She seemed to have grown young again.

They found Mrs. Foster looking bright and cheerful, with her knitting in her hands, that being the only work she was strong enough to accomplish.

"I am very glad to find you so much better," said Mrs. Cheston, sitting down by her.

"You cannot think how greatly I enjoy coming out of my bedroom at last, even though I have got no farther than this. I think I am getting really better now, and I hope Ruth will soon go back to her childhood again; such a dear, good girl as she has been!" said Mrs. Foster, affectionately.

Mrs. Cheston looked round to speak to Ruth, but she was away off at the end of the garden with Hattie showing her a bird's nest

in one of the currant bushes with little birds in it. Ruth was such an earnest, wide-awake sort of little girl; she always had something fresh and new to talk about, or to show her friends, and then she was a very conscientious child, too; her mother's heart rested on her with a feeling of comfort quite free from anxiety. The little girl was seeking her Saviour in her youth, and she had realized the truth of the promise, "They that seek me early shall find me;" her happiness was founded upon love to him, and therefore it could not be taken from her.

When Mrs. Cheston was ready to return home, Hattie was hunted up, and found with Ruth in the mill pretty well covered with white dust, but it was soon shaken off. As they were riding home, she said,

"Grandpa, you never took me to see that mill; it is a delightful place."

"I think so myself, dearie," said the old gentleman. "I'm very fond of being there; it's cool and shady."

"Not quiet, though," said Hattie; "but I do like to watch the fine white flour coming out, and then the smell is so clean and nice."

"There are not many things that our little

Hattie does not find some pleasure in," said grandpa, "and I would rather see that than a grumbling disposition."

"Just think of anybody's finding fault with anything about this dear, beautiful old Fernwood," said Hattie, "or thinking that Mr. and Mrs. Cheston were not the very nicest people that ever lived!" and they drove up to the door.

"Here's a letter, mistress," said Myrtle. "Came while you were gone."

CHAPTER XVI.



ATTIE found the evening so delightful that she could not shut herself up in the house just yet, but wandered off to the garden to live among the flowers until tea-time. She strayed among her favourite plants, carelessly forming a very pretty nosegay to take in with her, until after the sun had gone down. Presently she saw the moon was beginning to light up the garden and the evening star was shining, large and bright, and then she suddenly remembered it must be getting late, and yet there had been no summons to tea.

She went to the house, and at the side door, Myrtle met her.

"Honey," she said, "don't make a bit of noise, and don't laugh or say funny things just now when you go in."

"Why not, Myrtle? Nobody's sick, I hope?"

"No, only heart sick. You never saw your uncle Will, did you, dear?"

"No; is he here?" said Hattie, surprised at this greeting.

"He's master's youngest son, you know, and he's been away out West for a long while; the letter that came to-night tells that he's sick—very sick—and I wouldn't wonder if master set out by to-morrow's train to go to him."

"Oh, Myrtle, why didn't you call me? Can't I do something to help?"

"They've been talking and crying and crying and talking together for the last hour. I don't 'spect they've missed you, honey. But just now mistress called for tea, and I reckon you might go in."

Here was a new situation for Hattie; she had seen but little domestic trouble in her life—rarely been called upon to act as a comforter to any one—and now to find this cloud of sorrow resting upon her dear grandparents and their cheerful home was indeed enough to make her sad. Before going into the room she paused a few minutes in the entry to collect herself a little, that she might not say or do anything unbecoming; she felt as if going

into the presence of sorrow had something solemn about it. When the tea-bell rang, she went in.

"Grandma, let me pour out the tea to-night," she said, gently, "won't you?"

"If you can lift the heavy tea-pot, dear, I would be very glad to have you do it," answered the old lady, trying to look like herself.

"We have had serious news, Hattie, my dear," said Mr. Cheston. "I shall have to start early in the morning on a journey to the West; do you think you can take good care of grandma while I am gone?"

"I'll do everything I can with my whole heart, grandpa," Hattie replied.

Mrs. Cheston silently wiped the tears from her eyes; her trial was great that she could not take the journey with her husband, but it was too far; and besides that, preparation must be made for receiving the invalid, if his life should be spared to be nursed into perfect recovery here at his old home. There were no telegraph wires in those days, but grandpa expected to write every day. The case was not a hopeless one as yet, but there were reasons which Hattie did not understand why the illness of this son at a distance from home

caused peculiar feelings of anxiety in the hearts of his parents.

Hattie's first effort to help her grandma succeeded entirely. She poured out the tea very nicely, and grandpa told her he would not want a better cup of tea than she had given him; it was just as he liked it. The dear child did not know he would have "liked" it almost any way that night, but she was encouraged.

When the trunk was to be packed, Hattie was ready to bring the different things from the drawers for Mrs. Cheston to put in; she even suggested finding a corner for a bottle of cologne that she thought might refresh her sick uncle, "in case his head ached."

Instead of going to her bright little room that night with no shadow upon her thoughts, as in general, Hattie went slowly and thoughtfully after kissing her beloved grandparents and bidding her grandpa a tender good-bye. Her first experience of the changes and chances of this mortal life had come upon her young spirit; the world was not all lying in sunshine, as it had thus far appeared to her. To some children the effect of this discovery would have been a desire to go away from the

place where trouble had made an entrance, but it was not so with Hattie. She began to look for some way of helping her beloved grandma to sustain her trial; she remembered the many pleasant and instructive hours she had enjoyed through her efforts to give her happiness during this visit, and gratitude as well as affection led her to try to return this kindness as far as a child could do so. Her busy little brain was full of plans for saving grandma trouble, and surprising her with work already accomplished, and going very quickly to do her bidding, when sleep overcame her, and she knew nothing more until the sunshine was streaming into the room and she heard the carriage-wheels on the gravel beneath her window; her grandfather had just driven off to the station.

By the time Hattie was washed and dressed, Myrtle came up for her.

“Ready now, missy?” she said. “Master took his breakfast before he started, but mistress is waiting for you.”

“Yes, Myrtle; I’m coming right away. Does grandma seem pretty well this morning?”

“Very downhearted: she looks ten years older than she did yesterday; but little Hat-

tie will cheer her up ; and something tells me young Master Will isn't going to die this time."

Hattie felt brighter for this expression of Myrtle's hopefulness, so she looked more animated when she went into the room where Mrs. Cheston sat at the table waiting for her.


"Grandma," said the child, with a loving kiss, "we'll try to get the room ready against grandpa comes back with Uncle Will. Which used to be his room?"

Poor Hattie had, without intending it, said just the words that were the hardest for her grandma to bear at that moment, and the consequence was that Mrs. Cheston's tears flowed without restraint for a little while. Hattie could only stand still and, holding her grandma's head pressed to her breast, wait until she became more calm.

At length Mrs. Cheston resolutely wiped her tears away, and said,

"There, darling! now I am better. I tried so hard to keep up before your grandpa that I am weaker now, but we'll have our breakfast, and then I can talk to you."

CHAPTER XVII.

HE words of Hattie that had struck so painful a chord were, "Which used to be his room?"

This absent uncle, of whom the child had really known nothing, had left home suddenly some four years before this time. His room was found one morning empty, the bed not having been occupied, his trunk and all his clothing gone, and a note left on the dressing-table saying he had gone to seek his fortune at a distance, and his parents need not try to trace his wanderings. The only explanation of this strange conduct was found in the fact that, having a genial temperament and social disposition, he had become intimate with associates who exercised a bad influence over him, and who led him to think that he was kept down and made to submit to his father when he ought to be his own master and have full liberty of action.

It seemed almost like the temptation of

Satan in urging our first parents away from their safe and happy home to whisper such words into the ears of one who was blessed with such parents and a home such as but few young men are privileged to enjoy ; yet, as the human heart is prone to evil and naturally inclines to listen to the voice of Satan more readily than to the whispers of conscience, the poison did its work with but little resistance. The young man had finished his education, but had not yet decided upon the kind of business he preferred entering into, and in the mean time was helping his father on the farm, while he brightened the old homestead by his cheerful, lively ways.

His duties through the day were not neglected, but of the manner in which his evenings were spent his parents were frequently ignorant. Nothing could have been more sudden or unlooked for than this rash departure from his home. Mr. and Mrs. Cheston for three years were left mourning as for a child lost to them by death. At this time Hattie was too young to know anything about the trouble, and her mother had not alluded to it. But about one year before this summer of her visit news had at length been received

from this prodigal son. He had become weary of his wandering and wayward life (strange to say, he had not been vicious), and had been brought to repentance through the agency of a sermon preached one evening in a village where he was stopping for the night.

He was not yet prepared to come home, certain views and plans being presented to his mind which would, he thought, enable him, after a time, to return to his father's house without being a burden on him for his support. His parents, in their joy at his restoration to the paths of industry and virtue, would have preferred receiving him just as he was and doing everything for his comfort themselves, but their requests were vain, and from that time intercourse had been kept up through frequent and satisfactory letters.

It was no wonder, then, that the news of this son's illness proved almost too much for his parents to bear: the fear that they might nevermore meet him on earth, after the manner of his leaving them, was sufficient to make them unhappy, and had they not put their trust in the same merciful Father who had brought the wanderer back to the fold, they could not have borne the trial.

After Hattie had been made acquainted with this history—given to her partly by Mrs. Cheston, partly by Myrtle—she became more interested than ever in hearing about her uncle, and about his various occupations on the farm while he lived at home and was like sunshine in the house.

She found now that it was Uncle Will who had built the tasteful little bird-houses on poles in the back yard to which birds came every spring regularly to lay their eggs. The ornamental frames for climbing plants which Myrtle kept so nicely whitened were also of his manufacture. There was a fanciful weathercock on top of the coach-house, too, which he had designed and caused to be made.

Active and industrious by nature, he had generally something on hand, either for use or ornament, which his parents were gratified to find finished and placed in some appropriate spot about the house or grounds; but his principal charm was his sweet and affectionate disposition.

And this was the son who had been tempted by unprincipled companions to wound his parents by deserting them in their old age!

CHAPTER XVIII.

LITTLE Caroline grew rapidly better after the day of Mrs. Cheston's visit; the disease reached its crisis about that time, and the arrival of her mother just afterward had a very happy effect in hastening her recovery. The child possessed warm affections, and loved her mother very dearly, notwithstanding she was but little in her society.

Mrs. White sent a note to Mrs. Cheston to tell the cheering news, and to say that Caroline would like to see Hattie for a little while.

At first Hattie thought she would like to go, but then she remembered that she was left in charge of grandma, and decided that she would not go and leave her all alone, even for a couple of hours.

Mrs. Cheston urged her to go and not feel constrained to stay on her account, but Hattie remained firm.

When the messenger with the note in an-

swer had gone back, grandma took the little girl in her arms, and kissing her fondly, said,

"I am very glad, dear, that you were willing to stay with me to-day. I am happier to have you near me, and I thank you very much for deciding not to leave me."

These words more than repaid Hattie for the slight effort it had cost her to give up the visit.

On this day news was expected from Mr. Cheston; it was the first day they could possibly hear. About eleven o'clock Myrtle came to the door with two or three letters, which she gave to Mrs. Cheston; one was quickly selected, and with trembling hands the old lady broke it open. "Good news" were the first words at the top of the page, and being relieved of fear at once, she read the letter through rapidly but calmly.

Myrtle, who had stood by all anxiety, exclaimed,

"Then he's better?"

"Much better," said Mrs. Cheston; "the danger was past before his father reached him, and now he is thought to be improving daily."

"And how did master bear the journey?" asked the faithful servant.

"He was much tired, he says, but the welcome he received rested him more than anything else would have done."

Hattie pressed her grandmother's hand, which she had been holding. "Will they come home now, grandma?" she said.

"Grandpa does not say in this letter, darling, but we shall hear again to-morrow."

"Well," said Myrtle, "now we may all breathe free again. I felt pretty near sure that young Master Will wasn't going to be taken away from us all this time. Please the Lord, he'll live to be a comfort and blessing to his parents for many a long year yet."

"May the Lord grant it!" said Mrs. Cheston, devoutly, and then she rose from her chair and retired to her room, where Hattie knew she would like to be left alone for a time.

But on going out to the piazza, and from there to the garden, Hattie was surprised to notice how bright everything looked; the flowers looked as if a refreshing shower had increased their beauty, and the birds were singing their blithest songs: all nature had a new, revived aspect. The reason existed in herself alone; the dark veil over her vision caused by sorrow was now withdrawn, and

she saw everything once more through the eyes of her naturally cheerful disposition.

From that time Hattie remembered every morning to feel thankful when nothing painful had occurred, even if there was no special cause for gratitude for added happiness.

There is frequently as much reason for being grateful for what we are mercifully spared in the way of trial as for favours that are bestowed on us.

One of the other letters received that morning was from Hattie's mother. It brought the intelligence that she and her husband were about setting out on a journey which would probably keep them away three or four weeks, —a business journey of Mr. Winslow's.

They were starting rather suddenly, and would not be able to come out to the farm; but knowing from Hattie's letters how entirely happy she was, they left her with grandma without the slightest feeling of anxiety; still, if she should become homesick, she was at liberty to return in their absence, as the house would be taken care of by her aunt, and would be open all the time.

"Do you think you will want to go, dear?" said Mrs. Cheston.

"Oh no, grandma. I shall stay here and take care of you. Grandpa told me to do it," Hattie answered, with much warmth.

"I do not know what I should do without you, my child, but I must not be selfish about keeping you."

"There is no chance for you to be selfish, grandma, for it is my choice to stay, though I am glad you want me."

"Your mother had not heard of her brother's illness when she wrote this letter," said Mrs. Cheston, "and now that he is better, I will not allow it to alter her plans."

"Mother gets away from home so seldom," said Hattie, "that I am glad she is going to take this jaunt with father. How differently this summer is passing, grandma, from what we expected when I came here to spend my birth-day with you!"

"Yes, dear; we did not see into the future then as it has since turned out, and I often think it is a great mercy and a wise provision of our heavenly Father that we do not see what is in store for us."

"I am sure I had no idea that I would be so much favoured as to spend the whole summer with you at this dear old house."

"No, dear, and you did not foresee that you were to be a comforter under trouble to your grandma, yet you have been and still are."

"Oh, there's Ruth!" exclaimed Hattie, and out she ran to receive her friend.

The news had of course been heard at the mill that Mr. Cheston had been suddenly called away from home; directions had been left in writing for the miller during his absence, but Ruth had come with a kind and affectionate note from her mother to Mrs. Cheston, begging to know if there was any way in which her husband or herself could be of use while she was left alone, and expressing the greatest sympathy in the sorrow that had been the cause of Mr. Cheston's sudden departure.

While Mrs. Cheston went into the library to reply to this note, Hattie took Ruth out to show her all the attractions of the garden and poultry-yard, which to her were always great. The little girls were growing to like each other more and more. As they wandered about from one spot to another, talking as well as admiring, Hattie said:

"Ruth, did you ever hear anybody talk about having a mission?"

"How do you mean, Hattie?" said Ruth,—
"going out as a missionary?"

"No, I don't think that's it; I heard some ladies at home, when they came to see my mother, talk about not living for themselves, but finding out what their mission was, and I couldn't exactly understand it, but I've thought I would like to know what my mission is."

Ruth answered with a merry laugh: "Well, Hattie, if I was to stop and try to find out what mine is, I know the work wouldn't go on very well; so I think my mission must be just to do whatever wants doing, whether it is pleasant or not, and not think about it."

"That's what you have been doing ever since your mother was taken sick after her fall, Ruth, and I guess you are right; your example has done me good—I am sure of that: but what is my mission?"


"If you knew how you have cheered up your grandmother since you have been here, you would think your mission was to make her happier than she has been for a long time, Hattie. Mother and I noticed that Mrs. Cheston was not in as good spirits as usual before you came, but she got brighter right away."

"I think I see it now, Ruth; when I came

here to spend my birth-day, I came because I wanted to, for I was always fond of grandma; but after the school was closed I do believe it was right for me to stay here and do all I could for the comfort and help of my dear grandma and grandpa: anyhow, I mean to think it was ordered so: but I did not know I had found my mission."

Hattie was not aware that persons are often found looking away off on the verge of the horizon to find their duties, when they are lying close at hand.

CHAPTER XIX.

OR a time the news from Mr. Cheston continued to be of a cheering character; the invalid son was mentioned as getting better daily, though no time was fixed for his coming home.

After several letters had been exchanged, Mrs. Cheston began to feel anxious; she thought it singular that her husband named no day for their return, nor spoke of having things in readiness for them at home. She noticed now also that no special mention was made of her son's improvement.

But at length the mystery was solved by a letter saying that the young man had again been very ill, but was now getting better; the improvement at first had been but transient, and a relapse took place from which he suffered more than in the first attack. He was now more likely to recover than he had been at all; and as his strength was rapidly returning, it was desirable that his room should

be ready for his arrival some time within a week.

"Well, grandma," said Hattie, "we shall have nothing to do but just sit down and wait; for there's nothing more to be done in the way of getting ready, except the flowers that I shall put in Uncle Will's room the day we expect he will be here."

"This letter has cheered me so much, dear, that I think perhaps we can fill up the time in some pleasant way without sitting down doing nothing, as you said just now. How would you like to invite poor little Caroline to come and spend a few days with you."

"I would be very glad to have her, grandma, and help to get her made stronger, if it would not worry you."

"It would be better for me to think of some one besides myself, Hattie, just now; we could make it pleasant, I think, for Caroline, and, at any rate, she would find it a change, and they say that is good for invalids. I will write and invite her."

Mrs. White herself replied to the note, saying that nothing could have been more welcome than this invitation. Caroline was much better, but seemed restless, as if longing to

get away from the associations of her sick-room. She would bring her over to stay a few days the following afternoon.

Hattie was delighted with this answer, and asked,

“Which room shall Caroline have, grandma?”

“The one joining yours, my dear.”

“Then may I go and get it ready right away?”

“If you prefer doing it yourself, you may; go and ask Myrtle about it, dear,” said Mrs. Cheston.

Myrtle was at the spring-house, but, full of zeal in Caroline's cause, Hattie did not wait for a more appropriate time; down she ran through the meadow, almost upsetting Myrtle when she reached the spring-house as she stooped over skimming a pan of milk.

“What in the world, honey! Why, what's come over the child!” exclaimed the astonished woman.

“Oh, Myrtle, I want you to give me the sheets and pillow-cases and things,” Hattie said, panting between her words, “for the bed I'm going to make up for Caroline.”

“Sheets!” cried Myrtle; “why, does the

child think I keep 'em down here in the spring-house?"

Hattie laughed.

"Why, Miss Harriet, can't you be a little mite patient? I'll get the room ready before she comes;" and Myrtle looked more dignified than Hattie had ever seen her.

"But I want to do it all myself, Myrtle; won't you please tell me where to find the things?"

"Hum!" said Myrtle, and went on to skim another pan of milk.

Poor Hattie's ardour was considerably damped. She said nothing, but thought within herself:

"Well. I've not got the right mission now, I'm afraid. I guess I had better not interfere with Myrtle any more."

Then in her usual sweet and winning voice she said, "Never mind, Myrtle; after all, there is no hurry: she is not coming till to-morrow afternoon. I'll wait to do my part in fixing the room till after you have had time to do yours," and then went up to the house again.

She did not go at once into the parlour, but consoled herself for her disappointment by

selecting the flowers that she thought would be just right to cut for the adornment of Caroline's room the next day.

That evening, at tea, Hattie found by her plate a beautiful cake such as she knew Myrtle only made for her on special occasions ; the old servant intended it as an apology for her want of sympathy at the spring-house that morning, and as such Hattie very willingly allowed it to be understood, without a word on the subject on either side being spoken. But she confined her exertions after that more within her own sphere of duty, and did not meddle with Myrtle's work.

When bed-time came that night, and Hattie went to kiss Mrs. Cheston good-night, she said,

"Now, grandma dear, I want you to understand one thing."

"And what is that, darling?"

"Why, it is that I am your little Hattie for everything just the same after Caroline comes that I am now. I want to wait on you, and walk with you, and read to you, just as I do when we are here by ourselves."

"You shall, my dear ; all the difference will be that Caroline will share our pleasures with

us, and that we shall ride instead of walk, because she is not strong enough yet."

"Then I shall be very glad to have her," said Hattie. "I think she'll get well a great deal faster because she will be with my dear grandma. Good-night, again, and one more kiss."

And Hattie went to her slumbers with the best intentions of doing her double duty faithfully for the coming few days, and before lying down she prayed very sincerely that she might be strengthened to be a great help and comfort, especially to her grandmother, and after that to Caroline.

CHAPTER XX.

CAROLINE came on the appointed afternoon, looking very white and thin, poor child! There was an expression of sweetness on her face, however, that had not been there before.

Mrs. Cheston gave her a warm welcome, and Hattie led her into the parlour with great care and tenderness. After Mrs. White had gone home and Caroline was conducted to her chamber, Hattie's efforts to make the change a pleasant one to her became more evident in several ways.

"Oh," said Caroline, "here are the lovely flowers that seem sweeter here than anywhere else. I think I should know a bunch of flowers that came from your garden just by the smell, even if I could not see them."

"Yet our flowers are not rare," said Hattie.

"No, but it is the mixture; there is a way of putting flowers together that has a great deal to do with their perfume."

"I love this garden dearly," said Hattie; "it is old-fashioned and full of things that people now-a-days don't care to cultivate; but if a flower is sweet and pretty, how can it take anything away from its value to be old-fashioned?"

Caroline could not answer this important question of her friend, for she entirely agreed with her.

"At Dr. White's," she said, "the gardener seems to stand between me and the flowers; he'll say,

"'Don't cut that flower, Miss Caroline; it will spoil the looks of the bed,' or, 'That bud is not sufficiently blown yet, Miss Caroline,' when I prefer buds of roses to the roses themselves."

"Did you not walk in the garden after you got stronger?" said Hattie.

"Only once or twice; there was no freedom there. The truth is, Hattie, I wanted to come here so much that no place at home seemed nice. I was too happy for anything when your dear grandma sent the invitation for me to come."

"We will try and help you to get better," said Hattie; "dear grandma is doing just as

much for others as if she had no trouble of her own, but I am not going to forget her."

"When do you look for Mr. Cheston back?"

"We cannot tell; Uncle Will got worse again, but he is better now. The uncertainty tries grandma, but I believe we shall know in plenty of time to have things ready for him; indeed, there is nothing more to do, as far as I can see now. But I must not talk too much to you; shall I bring your tea up to your room, Caroline?"

"No, thank you; I am strong enough to go down again, and I would rather sit at the table in your pleasant dining-room."

Then Hattie went down stairs, and left her little friend lying on the couch in her room that she might get quite rested after her ride.

The couch was near the window, which overlooked the garden and fields beyond; at a little distance the barn and cattle-sheds were to be seen, though somewhat hidden by trees. After Caroline had lain still with her eyes closed half an hour or so, she sat up, and looking from the window, found the sun had gone down, leaving a mass of lovely clouds in the west; there was a gentle breeze stirring the

leaves, and the dewy air was filled with perfume. The soft, shadowy look of coming night was spreading over the grounds; there was a distant lowing of cows coming home to be milked; a sound of ploughs, carts, and harness being put up for the night; men whistling at the barn and talking to horses at the watering-trough. Everything seemed to say, "The day's work is done; rest is coming."

A sudden merry laugh not far off caused Caroline to stretch her head out of the window, and there was Hattie coming up the meadow from the spring-house; she had a plate of golden butter in her hand, while Myrtle carried a pail of milk in one hand and a pitcher of cream in the other. Some quaint remark of the old servant had called forth Hattie's merriment.

"How nice it must be to live on a farm!" Caroline said to herself.

She lay for a little while longer enjoying the tranquillity of the deepening twilight, watching the gradual change from day to night, listening to the last songs of birds and the variety of insects that are to be heard after sunset, and, lastly, gazing on the brightness

of the evening star coming out clear in the dark sky. Just as she rose from her couch she was joined by Hattie, who had come to take her down to tea after giving her a long time to rest.

This first evening at Fernwood was so peaceful and sweet that Caroline made a great progress toward recovery without knowing it.

After supper Hattie read the chapter and grandma offered up the usual prayers in the family, not omitting to pray for the little "stranger within their gates." A feeling of support and comfort came over the poor child, whose nervous system had been so seriously injured, and when she went to bed, her sleep was more refreshing than it had been since her illness commenced.

Ruth was invited to spend a day at the farm as soon as Mrs. Cheston thought Caroline would be strong enough to enjoy her society. The visit was a great recreation to the faithful little girl. Her mother had now so far regained her accustomed strength that she performed most of her duties without fatigue. Ruth was still very valuable in the house, but she was not obliged to think and plan so much as formerly.

She had prepared some needle-work to take with her on her visit, but when Mrs. Foster saw the bundle, she said,

“Now, my child, you are to leave that work at home. I cannot allow you to give yourself no rest at all; this day is to be a day of pleasure, and you may forget even me, if you will, among the rest of your cares.”

“Do not fancy I can do that, mother,” said Ruth. “I shall think of you many times, but if you would rather I should not take this little shirt, I will not. I have learned a new kind of knitting-stitch, and I’ll do that, instead.”

“Well, you may take your knitting-needles: perhaps the little girls would like to learn it too; but I want you to be out of doors and play to-day.”

Mrs. Cheston had the same kind of feeling in regard to Hattie; she desired to have all three of the children enjoy themselves, free from remembrance of sickness or care, so she told Hattie that Myrtle and she had many things to attend to that day, and they would be obliged if she would take her little friends out of the way to the summer-house and over to the nearest woods as much as she could;

they should have everything to take with them that would make their time pass pleasantly, and besides that, when they went to the woods she would send cushions and camp-chairs over that they might run no risk of taking cold from the ground.

Hattie innocently acquiesced in all her grandmother's plans, leaving her with Myrtle, because she thought she was doing more to oblige her in that way than if she kept Ruth and Caroline in the house to be entertained, and the consequence was that the children passed a day of such complete enjoyment as they never afterward forgot.

They were sent for about sunset, and though the wood was but a short distance off, grandma thought they would like the fun of riding home in the ox-cart, which had just come in from the fields. So she caused plenty of hay to be laid in it, and when the children packed in their various possessions and got in themselves, they had indeed a merry ride home; going rather out of the way for the sake of a back lane that led up by the barn. And such a tea as Myrtle had provided for them! Fruit and the richest cream were the crowning luxuries; but Hattie imagined that the various

things that grandma had told her were to be attended to by herself and Myrtle were some of them, at any rate, speaking for themselves on the tea-table.

Some of the beautiful and delicate ferns for which that wood was celebrated were brought home, and the children found pleasant occupation in pressing them between the leaves of old books, and years afterward the sight of those ferns brought the whole scene of that happy day in the woods vividly before their minds.

CHAPTER XXI.



SEVERAL weeks had now passed since the night when their son's illness had first been made known to Mr. and Mrs. Cheston, and the time still seemed indefinite when he would be able to bear the journey home. In the interval Mrs. Cheston was keeping up bravely, yet there were times when Hattie found her with her Bible open before her and traces of tears on her face; the long suspense had begun to affect her, although she was trying to conceal from those around her how much she really suffered.

At length, to Hattie's great delight, her mother suddenly made her appearance at the farm one morning after the usual train had arrived. She had hired the express wagon and driven down from the station. The meeting between her and Hattie was a very joyous one, but not so much so between her mother and herself; she saw marks of weariness and

anxiety on the countenance of Mrs. Cheston, which pained her exceedingly.

"You have not come with the intention of taking Hattie away from me, I hope?" said Mrs. Cheston, soon after the various pieces of news and information on both sides had been given.

"Are you not tired of her, dear mother?"

"Tired of her, Lizzie? She has been the light of the house, and my greatest earthly comfort since your father left us. I don't want to be too exacting, but if you could let me keep her until we see the travellers home, or, at any rate, until something definite is fixed upon, I should take it as a great favour."

"Oh, dear mother, do not imagine for a moment that I would take Hattie away if you find her a comfort to you. I shall be delighted to have her at home again when she comes, because I miss her, of course, very much, but I think the good she is receiving with you in every way is so great that I am better satisfied to have her stay, and your wishing it is reason enough. Her health seems to have improved very much."

"I am so happy, mother; how could I help growing stronger? And I am learning how

to do a great many important things too," said Hattie.

"Between grandma and Myrtle, I only wonder you are not pretty well spoiled, my dear," said her mother, "but I do hope you will be more apt in learning good housekeeping ways than I was when I was your age."

"Hattie bids fair to be a first-rate housekeeper," said grandma, looking fondly at the child, "but, more than that, she is a comforter in trouble and a kind little nurse in sickness. We did not half know what kind of child she was until she came here to spend one day and remained more than two months."

Mrs. Winslow's visit had a cheering effect upon her mother; she had a bright and lively disposition, always saw the best side of everything, and she had many pleasant little incidents to relate connected with her recent travels, to which all her hearers listened with much interest; even Myrtle prolonged her duties around the table for the sake of hearing the wonderful adventures "Miss Lizzie" had to tell. She had visited persons known to grandma in old times, and of course Myrtle was as anxious to hear all about these old friends as her mistress was.

While Mrs. Winslow was taking an early cup of tea before being driven to the station, she said to Mrs. Cheston,

“Now, dear mother, let me beg of you to write and ask father to come home, without waiting for brother Will, as soon as he can safely leave him. When he gets strong enough he can follow, but I think you have been alone quite long enough.”

“I’ll think about it, dear,” said Mrs. Cheston; “my hopes have been fixed upon seeing them both together, but if it is not the will of my heavenly Father that I should be thus indulged, I will try to bear it.”

Hattie rode with her mother to the cars, and as they went, Mrs. Winslow said to her that she could not help feeling a little uneasy about grandma, she looked so badly.

“Do your best, my darling,” she said, “as you have done all along, and if grandma seems more ill, let me know instantly, and I will leave everything and come to you at once.”

“How could you leave all the other children, mother, after you have been away so long already?”

“I will try and persuade your father’s sister to come again and stay,” she said; “anyhow,

write to me at once, Hattie. There's the whistle!" and there was just time for Mrs. Winslow to get on the platform before the evening train came dashing up.

"I got one kiss, though," said Hattie to herself as her mother took her seat in the car and waved her hand to her little daughter before being carried off and out of sight as if by magic.

Hattie looked at the platform, at the empty railway, and the dispersing people, and all seemed a blank. One moment her mother was with her and they were talking together; the next moment, almost, they were separated, and far beyond each other's sight.

"Well," thought Hattie, "there's nothing to do but get into the carriage and go home. Railroads are queer things."

But much as she had enjoyed her mother's bright visit, the parting words about her beloved grandmother lingered in her memory.

"Can she be ill," thought Hattie, "and afraid to let me know it?"

Then a bright thought struck her; she feared it was a bold thought. However, she said to the man who was driving,

"Simeon, could you drive right fast, and

take me round to Dr. White's before I go home?"

"Certain, Miss Hattie; did you want to see the young girl that stayed at our house?"

"No. I am not going on purpose to see her, but I want to stop there a few minutes," said Hattie.

The horses were not long in making the increased distance, and the doctor was at home. Mrs. White and Caroline were absent, —out driving, the girl said.

"How are you all at home, Hattie?" said Dr. White. "Grandpa not got home yet?"

"He has not come home, Dr. White, and—I hope I am not too forward, but I think grandma does not seem right well. I came without her knowledge to ask if you will come over and see what is the matter with her."

"Does not seem right well? Hum!" said the doctor. "Well, I am not much surprised, because she has had a wearing time of suspense and anxiety. Yes, Hattie, I'll go home with you now, my dear;" and the doctor left word that his man might come over to Fernwood and bring him back in about an hour.

"I wonder if grandma will think I have

Fernwood.



"I came to ask, if you will come over and see what is the
matter with grandma?"

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done wrong?" said Hattie, greatly relieved that the doctor was going so promptly, and yet not without some uneasiness from having acted without advice.

"You don't think she will be unwilling to see an old friend like me, do you, my dear? I am not uneasy about that. But, Hattie, I noticed her appearance last Sunday in church; she looked pale and very sad. You have taken the matter in hand in good time, however, and I trust we may soon get her well again, with the Lord's blessing on our efforts.

CHAPTER XXII.

MYRTLE stood at the door when the carriage stopped ; as twilight had begun to deepen, she did not see who was inside, but was anxiously expecting Hattie.

"I'm so glad to see you home again, honey," she said, hurriedly. "Mistress has had a fainting turn ; hadn't we better let Sim go right back and bring Dr. White?"

"I'm here already, Myrtle," said the doctor, in his calm, reassuring voice.

"Bless the Lord, my dear sir!" said Myrtle, hardly knowing what she did say. "Come right in ; the good Spirit must have sent you."

On the wide sofa in the sitting-room Mrs. Cheston was reclining, somewhat relieved by the remedies Myrtle had promptly administered, but very weak still. Her attack had been of an alarming description, and required immediate remedies. Dr. White remained with her for an hour, until he had succeeded

in producing such results as he had wished, and in preventing further danger to the brain, and then he joined Hattie in the library. She was waiting there to receive his directions.

“First, Hattie, let me tell you,” said the doctor, “that you need have no fear you were too bold in coming for me this evening without leave; you have probably, under Providence, saved your grandma a severe spell of illness and perhaps her life, by your thoughtfulness. Had I not seen her until morning, I cannot answer for the consequences; everything is going favourably now, and I hope in a day or two she will be well again. To-night I should prefer her not going up stairs or using any exertion, but Myrtle can arrange a bed on the sofa for her, and she will stay in the room. Now, can I trust you with the directions about the medicines?”

“I think I can remember, Dr. White,” said Hattie, “but I had better write them down.”

So she went to get pencil and paper, and carefully wrote down the stated hours at which the different medicines were to be given through the evening and night.

“Remember, my child,” said the doctor, noticing how white she was from excitement,

“your dear grandma is out of danger now entirely, thanks to your early care of her; you must not imagine anything worse than the reality. If your grandfather and uncle were to come home to-morrow, she would probably be well by to-morrow night.”

This comforted Hattie very much, and gave her additional strength. She set about her duties as nurse with a cheerful spirit. Nothing would induce her, however, to obey Myrtle about sleeping in her own room; the couch in the library was to be her bed for that night, she said. Accordingly, after the house was made quiet for the night, Hattie gave the proper medicine, and then arranged her phials and glasses carefully, to prevent mistakes, and taking grandma's watch with her, went into the library.

Four times in the night the little white figure came gliding in at the proper times to give the medicines. Myrtle was lying quietly in her bed on the floor, and Hattie found no occasion to disturb her, for grandma was quite comfortable, and only roused long enough to take her medicine and say a loving word or two before she slept again.

At daylight Myrtle got up, and finding Mrs.

Cheston in a sweet, natural sleep, went quietly out of the room to take a look at Hattie.

The child started up. "Is grandma worse?" she said.

"No, honey, no; lie down again. But I see by the glasses, that you've been attending to her in the night without calling me. Now take your sleep out, and I'll mind mistress."

Relieved in her mind, Hattie sank back on her pillow. The first long night of anxious nursing she had ever known was now happily at an end, and illness does not seem so serious by daylight as in the weary night-watches.

Quite early in the morning Dr. White arrived; he was delighted with the improvement of his patient, and praised Hattie for having been so faithful in giving the medicines. Much depended on it, he said, and he felt sure that his directions for the day would be just as punctually obeyed. Before going away he went into the library and wrote a note to Mrs. Winslow: more because she had told Hattie to let her know if her mother became ill than because her presence was really needed. He mentioned to the little girl what he had done, and said he would put the letter himself into the post-office as he went back.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. FOSTER herself, on hearing of Mrs. Cheston's sudden illness, came just after the doctor had gone, full of affectionate interest, and ready to stay the entire day to help nurse.

Hattie felt gratified by this offer. There was really no active nursing required, but it was comforting to see the pleasant face of Mrs. Foster about the house, and also to know that, if any sudden change should occur, she was close at hand to give her counsel and assistance. Myrtle, of course, had many things to attend to in the kitchen, not the least important of which was preparing the nourishing food that would tempt Mrs. Cheston to eat more than she had been doing for some time.

Hattie was seldom absent from her dear grandma's side; as the day advanced and the fever entirely left her, Hattie brought her sewing and sat talking with her, or else read aloud from her Bible or some suitable book.

On one occasion, when she had been reading for about fifteen minutes something she thought would please her grandma particularly, Mrs. Foster noticed her eyelids drooping and her voice faltering more and more until it ceased, and with her hand in the book the weary child's head sunk down on the chair-back, and she was fast asleep.

Grandma smiled. "Dear little soul!" said Mrs. Foster; "she is conquered at last; children can't lose rest at night as grown people can."

"She shall sleep as long as possible," said grandma. "I'm getting better all the time, and I have good company too."

So the afternoon wore away, the house breathlessly quiet, Mrs. Foster gently stepping from one room to another as things were needed, until at last the sun went down and darkness began to creep over the landscape. Hattie still slept on.

She waked, at last, to find a joyful commotion in the house. At first she was confused and could not remember where she was, but hearing her mother's voice reassured her, and when more lights were brought, the whole blessed truth flashed before her eyes. Grand-

pa took her in his arms and kissed her tenderly, then her mother, then a tall, very pale and thin young man took her hand and said,

“And this is my little niece, of whom I have heard so much?”

“Kiss your uncle Will, Hattie,” said her mother, and Hattie needed no second bidding. She threw her arms lovingly round his neck and gave him a warm kiss of welcome. But with her accustomed thoughtfulness, her next impulse was to look after grandma. The dear old lady was sitting quietly on her sofa, drying her eyes from their tears of overflowing joy, and Mrs. Foster was just giving her a glass containing some reviving mixture; the suddenness of her joy had been a little too much for her, but no serious consequences seemed likely to result from it.

The next moment Uncle Will had escaped to the kitchen, where Myrtle was giving him her own peculiar views of his long absence, his present appearance, and the blessedness of his having come home “just in time to keep his sainted mother from falling into her grave.”

Such hours as this come rarely in the experience of any human being: joy is a great restorer after sickness. The quiet comfort of

looking upon the two faces so dear to her, and the happiness of holding the hand of her long-absent son, did more for Mrs. Cheston than even added medicines could have done, now that the actual danger of her attack had gone by. Had this arrival taken place the night before, it would have been an injury; now it was a blessing.

Mrs. Foster, who was in the room when the travellers arrived, and who gladly welcomed them, soon found herself in the dining-room helping Myrtle in her additional preparations for supper.

Explanations were soon made. Dr. White's letter of that morning had reached Mrs. Winslow, and she was making immediate arrangements to take the first train to her mother when the arrival of her father and brother on their way home was announced to her. Their distress on hearing of Mrs. Cheston's illness made the time pass tediously. The hour for the train to start came at last, and they all got off. On approaching the house, the darkness alarmed Mr. Cheston; he scarcely recognized his home without the usual array of bright windows. When he understood the case he was not surprised, and all small matters

became insignificant when he was told that his last two letters had not been received.

"No wonder your dear grandma became anxious," he said to Hattie, "hearing nothing for so many days; in my last letter particularly I prepared her for our return to-day, and expected to find everything brighter than common, at least until I heard of her illness at your mother's. There is not much certainty in the affairs of this world, after all, but still we have so much reason for gratitude that we have no right to complain of anything.

"I little thought, when I left your grandma, that my absence would be so long, but I trust we shall not be separated again very soon."

It was made known to Mrs. Cheston that the cause of her son's illness had been overwork and too close application to his books. He had been teaching in a large seminary, and at the same time pursuing his own studies in the hope of obtaining a professorship in a certain college. This prospect he had not communicated to his parents; he felt a natural distrust of himself after the earlier part of his life, and preferred waiting to prove the sincerity of his own intentions and the reality of his efforts toward obtaining his own sup-

port. Intellectual pleasures had always been his choice, after receiving the liberal education which his father had given him.

That night, when prayers were offered up before retiring, thanksgivings were also rendered most abundantly. "Truly, my cup runneth over," were the words of the happy mother as she kissed her son on his way to his room, where Hattie had at last had the comfort of putting the vases of fresh flowers, for in the evening she had gone out in the garden to her well-known flower-beds, and under the bright stars had selected the fairest and sweetest for the welcome home.

CHAPTER XXIV.



ABOUT a week after this happy return, Hattie was riding on horseback one morning, and by her side her uncle; his strength was returning quite rapidly, but exercise in the open air was directed by Dr. White.

Grandpa found ample occupation on the farm after his long absence, and, therefore, gave the charge of Hattie's horseback rides into the hands of his son, which proved a pleasant and useful arrangement for both of them.

"I would like to have you stop at the mill a few minutes, uncle, if you have no objection," Hattie said as they rode along.

"No objection in the world, Hattie; I used to spend much of my time there when I was a little boy. It is a dear old place."

"But, uncle, you never knew Ruth, did you?"

"Ruth Foster?" said her uncle—"the

daughter of the miller? No: I think she must have been but a little child when I frequented the place. What about her?"

"Oh, she's such a dear good girl! She took care of her mother and the children for ever so many weeks while her mother was sick after a fall; she is so nice that I like her very much."

"And is not there another friend of yours, Hattie, at Dr. White's?"

"Yes, uncle: Caroline; she was very gay all last winter, and went to parties, and the theatre, and concerts, and everything that grown up people go to, and this spring she had to come to the country to get strong, but I think she will never want to spend her time the same way again. She is very much changed."

"Changed for the better, do you mean, Hattie?"

"Yes, Uncle Will; don't you think it is for the better, when Caroline says she loves to be with grandma and hear her talk about trying to be a Christian? and she told me she wanted to be good herself."

"Yes; I should think the love of the world and worldly pleasures had not taken very deep

root, if she is anxious to change her way of life and devote herself to the service of her Saviour. We must try to help her, Hattie."

"I do not know enough to help anybody, Uncle Will. I would like to know more; for since I have been so long with grandma and grandpa I think it is beautiful to be good," said Hattie, very earnestly.

"Hattie," said her uncle, "do you know I have heard a great deal about you since I have been sick?"

"About me, uncle? Why, what could grandpa have to say about me, except that he left me to take care of grandma? That is all."

"And that is a great deal, my dear little niece. You have done your duty well. Grandma had a great many things to tell of you in her letters."

"Uncle Will," said Hattie, with great animation, "when I had been here a few weeks, I found out that taking care of grandma was my mission."

"How do you mean, Hattie?"

"Why, uncle, some ladies who were talking with mother once said everybody ought to have a mission, and not live for themselves, but do something for other people all the time.

I used to think it was very hard and wonderful to have a mission, and not easy to find one."

"Well, Hattie, you have certainly found yours without the trouble of looking for it. This summer would have been a far less happy one to your grandparents if you had not been here devoting your time and services to their use and cheering them with your lively presence. The last few weeks especially your grandma has leaned on you entirely, judging from her letters. Ah, my dear little niece, I wish I could have seen my duty as clearly some years ago, and stayed to comfort her, as you are doing now!"

"You will find your mission soon, I expect, Uncle Will," said Hattie.

"I hope so, Hattie. I had hoped to have continued my studies and do some good in the college where my professorship would have been, but since I have returned home I have been led to think that my father desires me to succeed him in taking charge of this large farm, and to assist him now as soon as I am stronger. It will be a trial to me, Hattie, because I think I love books better than farming, and it seems to me as if I could do more

good in the college, but I may be mistaken. I have grieved my father very deeply in time past, so now I will try to atone for it, and if I find farming is to be my duty, Hattie, I will accept it, looking for a blessing on my subdued will. All this matter must remain quiet, though. I think I can trust your discretion not to speak about it. Here we are at the mill; how natural it looks!"

Ruth was sweet and simple in her manners, as usual; she told Hattie, when they were together, that she thought her uncle looked as if he was a very religious man, and she liked him.

After a short visit there, Hattie and her uncle rode round by Dr. White's, where they saw all the family, and Uncle Will took particular notice of Caroline. She still retained a sad, wistful expression in her eyes; she was in much better health, but not yet equal to the studies in a large school, nor to the gayeties of the coming winter. While she was out of the room her aunt spoke of her with much interest and concern, telling Mr. Cheston the circumstance of her fright and its dangerous consequences. The boy had been found and dealt with; his parents very proper-

ly considering that he deserved severe punishment for such cruel mischief; but Caroline shrunk from meeting him again.

That evening, when the united and happy family at Fernwood were all sitting together after tea, Uncle Will made a proposal to his father in which Hattie felt deeply interested at once.

If, he said, his parents had no objection to giving up a certain room on the ground floor that was but seldom used, he would like to teach the three little girls, Hattie, Ruth, and Caroline, several hours every day. There was no good school in the neighbourhood, and if the weather was unfavourable, Caroline could be driven over, or Ruth either, although she lived quite near.

Hattie could scarcely sit still, so eager was she to express her entire delight in the prospect; her eyes sparkled with excitement.

Her mother, observing her animated expression, immediately said,

“The plan meets my approbation for Hattie; she will be happier to continue her care over grandma than to spend the winter in town, I know.”

“And grandma would not know how to do

without her now," said Mrs. Cheston, giving the little girl a loving kiss.

"Yes," said grandpa; "Hattie seems part of the household. After all she has been to her grandmother in my absence, we cannot spare her."

"Well, then," said Mrs. Winslow, "we can easily ask the other children, or their parents, and I hope they will consent."

Mr. and Mrs. Cheston freely gave up the room that was wanted,—the more willingly that they were touched with the humility of their dear son: teaching little girls, instead of continuing his studies for the expected professorship, did indeed seem like an evidence of a submissive will; and this submission of the will had its origin in a renewed heart.

"I cannot give up books altogether, Hattie," her uncle said to her, with a smile, an hour or two afterward; "perhaps I can guide your taste in the choice of your reading and inspire you with a love of study, if I have you and your little friends under my care this winter."

Caroline received immediate permission to remain for the winter at Dr. White's and take lessons with Hattie, while Ruth gladly united

in the plan, being naturally fond of study and having had but few advantages.

And a happy, peaceful winter it proved to be; Hattie's mission of love to her grandmother not being interrupted by her duties toward her uncle. She continued to make Fernwood her home, becoming more devoted to her grandparents as the infirmities of age advanced upon them, willingly given to them by her mother, who saw her frequently, and uniting with her uncle in cheering their declining days.

"I don't see, for my part," said Myrtle, "how we ever managed to live at all before Miss Hattie came for her birth-day and young Master Will came back from the West. If it hadn't been that mistress was the patientest Christian that ever lived, the house would have been too dismal to hold us."

Caroline never spent another winter such as the one in which her health had been injured; she learned the value of higher pursuits, and enjoyed more substantial pleasures than those she had once considered so attractive.

Dear little Ruth continued to walk in her bright path of duty, singing as she went,

making her father and mother happy that they owned such a daughter.

Uncle Will never regretted having resigned his cherished hopes for the sake of gratifying his father. As time advanced, he found many ways of making his influence felt in the cause of his heavenly Master throughout the neighbourhood; and by the time at which his studies would have been completed he had become established in the respect and affection of his neighbours, doing good by the force of example, and in many ways besides.

Riding home one evening with his little niece, who, though so much younger than himself in years, was a most intelligent companion, Uncle Will said,

“Hattie, you and I have found out our missions without having to look very far away for them: don’t you think so?”

“Oh yes, uncle, and they are such very happy ones! Ought we to be happy, though?” she added, with a sudden look of questioning on her brow, for Hattie liked to be sure about everything.

“It seems to me,” replied her uncle, “that simply doing what we believe to be our duty ought to make us happy, my dear; but, inde-

pendently of that, our duty in this case, yours and mine, leads us to do all in our power to make those we love happier and more comfortable than they could be without us. How can we help finding that this work adds to our own happiness? I think we may safely indulge ourselves with it, Hattie."

"But, uncle," said Hattie, "sometimes people do have missions that make them—" and she hesitated for a word.

"Make them practice self-denial, do you mean?"

"Yes, Uncle Will;—things that they would really rather not do."

"Certainly, my child, there are many such missions; we are all called upon to take up our cross and follow Christ. But if we love our Saviour, Hattie, as we want to love him, self-denial will not seem hard or painful for his sake. You are young yet; in the years to come I trust you will be a faithful servant of Christ, living and working for him, and his love will sweeten the hardest work he will ever call upon you to do for him."

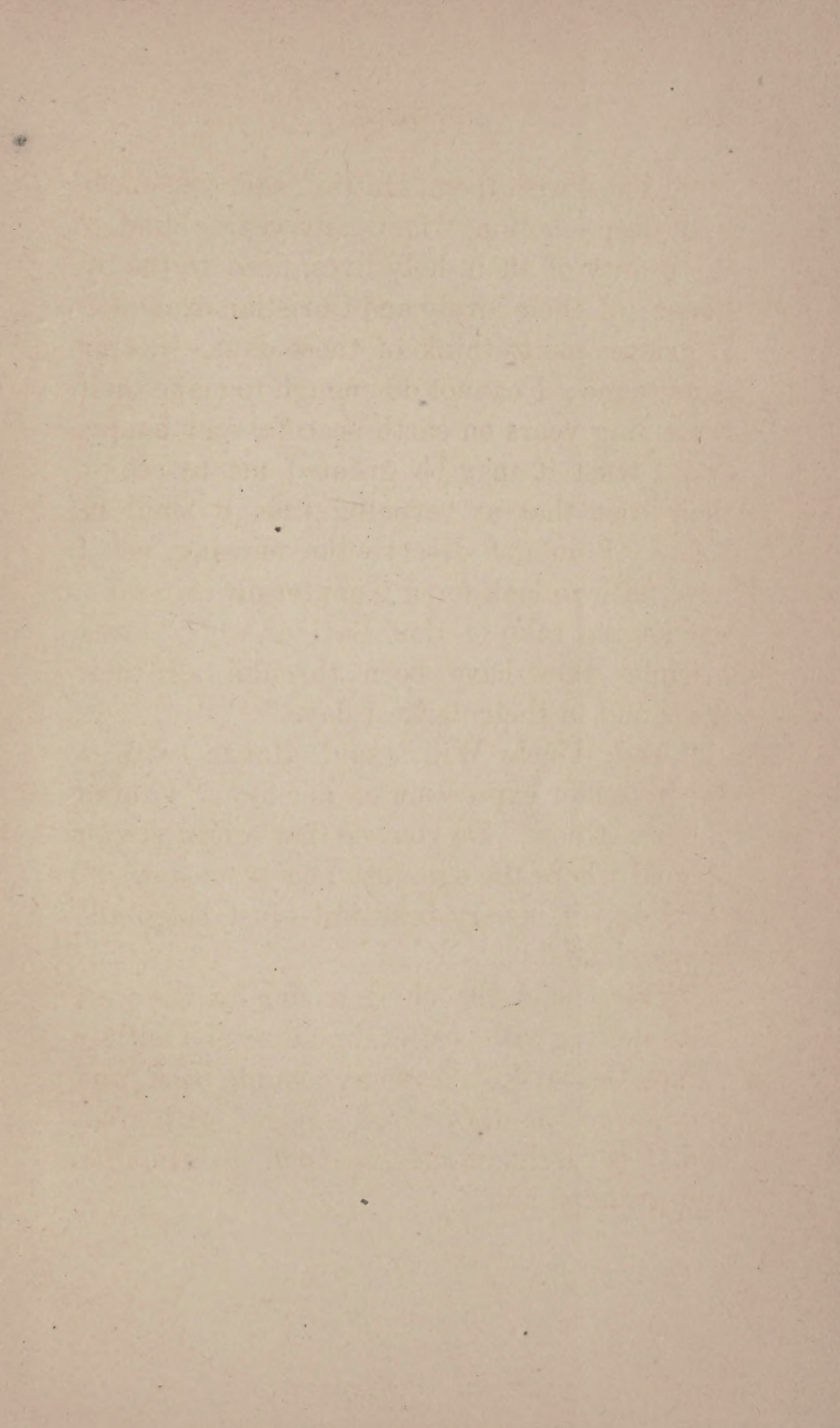
"I want to work for Jesus, uncle; no one could live with grandma and grandpa and not learn to love the Saviour they love so much."

“I lived with them, Hattie,” said her uncle, with deep emotion, “for many years, blind to the beauty of their holy lives, dead to the influence of their lovely and Christian examples. It grieves me to think of those days,—deeply grieves me; I cannot do enough to make their remaining years on earth peaceful and happy, and I trust it may be granted me to see in their case that at ‘evening time it shall be light.’ I do not deserve the blessing, yet I have faith to look for it; not for my own sake, but for the sake of that Saviour whose meek disciples they have been through all their trials and in their darkest days.”

“And, Uncle Will,” said Hattie, with a sweet, tender expression on her face, “I think you see it now. Do you see that bright streak of gold where the sun just now went down?”

“I do—it is very beautiful—just below the heavy cloud.”

“That,” said the child, gazing at the west and speaking with perfect simplicity and faith—“that, Uncle Will, is your coming back, and your love; the dark cloud is edged with gold, and it is ‘light at evening time’ to grandma and grandpa now.”



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